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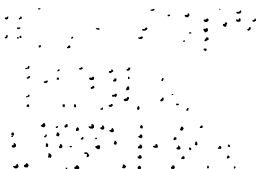
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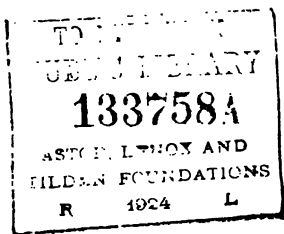
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BY
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LONDON
A. H. BULLEN
18 CECIL COURT, ST. MARTIN'S LANE, W.C.

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
THE HANDSOME QUAKER	1
THE POLITICIAN	20
A CASTLE IN SPAIN	40
THE WIDOWER	54
GIPSIES BOTH	72
'A PACK O' CHILDER'	79
A RIDICULOUS AFFAIR	86
THE CRY OF THE CHILD	101
THE FORGE	123
THE ENEMY OF GOD	131
THE THREE SONS	144
A BENEFACTOR	158
THE WARDROBE	183
A CHILDLESS WOMAN	200
PINCH AND THE POORHOUSE	208
THE FRENCH WIFE	220
HUNTING-CAP	231
THE CASTLE OF DROMORE	237

THE HANDSOME QUAKER

THEY were supping at Joshua Fayle's, behind shuttered windows, although without a green and gold summer twilight yet lingered. Perhaps it behoved the Quakers to be chary of displaying wealth and importance, as it did their wealthy Roman Catholic neighbours, who led their lives of luxury and refinement behind blank walls that said nothing to the world. Perhaps there were other reasons for shutting out the daylight.

The maid, Elizabeth, had just withdrawn the cloth of fine damask, and the table of polished dark mahogany reflected handsomely the silver coasters which carried the decanters of wine, the squat silver candlesticks, and the tapering crystal of the Waterford glasses.

Joshua Fayle, his friend, Dr. Aikenhead, and Rebecca, Joshua Fayle's daughter, drank only water. The other guest sipped his wine as if he liked it, though he was over-young and over-careless for a connoisseur.

At him as she went out, it might have been noticed that the maid, Elizabeth, cast a glance of adoration. He was a person indeed to draw admiring and affectionate eyes. In his garb of Quakerish cut he laughed and sparkled, a creature of another world.

His face had a soft beauty of outline and colouring that would have been too feminine, but for the tan of the weather and the daring and adventurous brilliancy of his smile. He chattered incessantly, lifting his glass against the light to catch the fire of the old port; and his sallies wreathed in grave smiles the faces of the two elderly men, who beamed on him with looks at once indulgent and admiring.

"Tut! tut! Thee will never pass for a Quaker," said Dr. Aikenhead after some merry sally. "Thy air bewrayeth thee."

"For a wild Jacobin, a harum-scarum fellow, a care-nothing, do-nothing *vaurien*?"

"Hardly that, my Lord." At the sound of the title Joshua Fayle started and looked about him, and then nervously admonished his friend. "No titles, if it please thee, David. They are unfit for a Friend at any time, and doubly unfit at a time like this."

"I had forgotten," said Dr. Aikenhead. "Walls have ears, even here where the very walls are loyal to thee and this guest of thine."

"You are too good to me," said the young man. "I keep you in hot water continually. Yet, at a pinch, I could really play the Quaker. *Voilà!*"

He smoothed his frank face into quiet lines, and the change was so sudden and startling that a murmur of surprise accompanied the merriment of the party.

"Thee hath great command of thy facial muscles," said the physician again. "I have no doubt that, equipped beforehand, thee would rise to an emergency. But what if they come upon thee unequipped?"

"Ay, what, indeed?" repeated Joshua Fayle. "Thee will hardly believe it, David, but this guest of ours on his arrival handed to Elizabeth, our maid, his top-boots, in which his name was fully written."

"But the girl was staunch," said the young man, laughing. "Hang it, they are all staunch. It had been worth a thousand pounds to her if she had made her discovery known. Instead she wept upon my hands. And she might have had a thousand pounds for my carcase. Good wench! Still I am sorry it happened. I have an inveterate inability to take care of myself, but I should at least take care of my friends."

"Let that consideration move thee, Friend John Whittinghame, from New York, if none other will," said his host, gravely smiling.

"There is not a woman in Cork would betray

thee," said the young hostess, speaking for the first time, "or would not die to save thee."

She sat at the end of the table facing her father, and the lights glimmered on her brown head, smooth as satin, and on her soft creamy-pale skin. Rebecca Fayle's expression was one usually of extreme quietness. Her grey cashmere sacque, with its petticoat of grey satin, and lace fichu and ruffles, was a quietness to the eye. But as she looked up at her father's guest, something of impassionedness in the eyes and voice accompanied the impassioned words.

"Ah, sweet friend," said the young man, gently bowing, "none knows better than I the truth and tenderness of which your sex is capable."

"And we would be quick too in the hour of peril," she said, her eye lighting. "But that I would not have thee endangered, I would almost crave an opportunity of showing thee how I could stand, ay, and contrive in a time of danger."

"Rebecca," said her father, "such vehemence is hardly fit for a maiden."

"But this is no common man," she answered proudly.

"And we are people of peace. We are proud that Friend John Whittinghame hath entrusted himself to our keeping. But we would fain pass on our precious charge without conflict or violence with any man."

"Faith, I am so used to a clash of a sword at my

heels," said Master John Whittinghame, "that it is hard for me to go soft-foot and without a swagger. Still, for your sakes, dear hosts, I will strive to be careful."

"For more sakes than ours," said Dr. Aikenhead, gravely.

"Ay, indeed. I do not forget them," answered the young man, with sudden seriousness.

"There is not only thy lady wife and her babies, but there is the country thou servest."

"Ah, poor Grania, she's down in the dirt and a shame to be seen. But we'll lift her again yet."

He trolled suddenly a stave of a street ballad :

"As Grania was wandering along the sea-shore,
For seventy weary long years and more,
She saw Bonaparte coming far off at sea,
Saying 'Rowl away, my boys, we'll clear the way.
So pleasantly.'"

"They ought to be on the sea by now," he said, and then lifted his head as one listening.

Through the quietness of the massively-built house and the shuttered windows, came the clatter of horses and armed men in the street, and almost at the same moment the door of the room opened violently, and the maid Elizabeth rushed in.

"There are soldiers at the door," she cried distractedly, "and the street is full of them. Listen, there they are, beating on the door because I would

not open it to them. And oh, my Lord, I would have died to save you, though I'm only a poor girl."

She flung herself at the young man's feet and began kissing his hands.

The rest of the party sat as if turned to stone, and gazed at each other with pale faces.

"Why, 'tis the fortune of war," smiled the one most concerned, and there was nothing but pride and excitement in his face. "Still, if there is any way by which I need not compromise you, good friends, be sure I shall take it."

"There is no hiding-place," said Joshua Fayle.

Through the house there came the beating of sword-hilts on the heavy hall-door, and the voices of men demanding admission in the King's name.

"Let me stay and brave it out," cried the young man gaily. "I should like to see whether I can impose Master John Whittinghame upon my late comrades in arms."

"There is the closet in my room," said Rebecca in a low voice to her father.

"Ay, I had forgotten it," cried Joshua Fayle. "It may serve. If 'tis no yeomanry troop, but led by an officer of the King, it may be that he will make but hasty search of a young maid's chamber. Come, my Lord, it is our one chance."

He snatched a candle from the table and led the way hastily to an adjoining room. The place smelt

sweetly as they entered of lavender and fresh linen, and the airs of an old garden blew through the open window.

The closet was sunk in the wainscoting near the bed-head. Joshua Fayle pushed his guest quickly within it.

"This wardrobe in front of it," he said, "and they may search no further. Patience now, we will deliver thee as soon as may be. Thee will suffer inconvenience from want of air, perhaps, but no danger, for there are chinks in the wood."

"*Sacré!* I should suffer more inconvenience if they were to discover me," laughed the young man gaily, as he disappeared into the dark depths.

Joshua Fayle pushed the wardrobe in front of the door and returned to his daughter and friend. Already signs of a fourth guest had disappeared, and in the dim light of the candles the perturbation on their faces was hardly visible.

"Go to thy kitchen, wench," he said to the trembling Elizabeth, "and for his sake we are trying to save, keep trouble out of thy face. Here, take a glass of wine. I do not approve of it, but it may put courage in thee. Why, they will have the house down; can I trust thee to open to them?"

"Why, yes," said Elizabeth, her wit and courage returning to her with the wine. "They cannot

expect a poor girl not to look frightened with such a disturbance in a quiet house."

When a few minutes later she ushered a tall young man in uniform into the room, the party showed only such disturbance as might be expected.

He lifted his hat as he entered, and stood bare-headed, with a curious air of deprecating humility, considering that he came armed with such powers. He first bowed deeply to Rebecca Fayle, across whose cheeks a warm crimson flush flowed at his coming, and then turned apologetically to her father.

"Pray forgive me, sir," he said, "for this intrusion; I am but acting under orders, and very unwelcome orders to me."

"Do not apologize," answered Joshua Fayle. "We understand that it behoves thee as a soldier to render obedience. But the reason, young sir, the reason for this descent upon quiet people and loyal citizens?"

He spoke mildly; but the young man flushed all over his handsome face.

"It is no work for a soldier; but the town-major is busy to-night searching the houses of members of your society in Cork. And frankly, it is better I and my men should conduct the search than he and his. The warrant bids us search for the body of Edward Fitzgerald, commonly known as Lord Edward Fitzgerald, son of the Duke of Leinster, and now in

hiding for the crime of high treason. It is known that he has been in Cork lately, and has received the hospitality of the Quaker community, being passed from one of their houses to another. His person is well known in Cork, where he is called the Handsome Quaker."

He stopped reading from the warrant, and stood looking at them, pulling his moustache nervously.

"My men are below," he said. "I wish to execute the warrant with all possible forbearance and courtesy. I have no doubt that my visit will prove quite unnecessary."

"We thank thee for thy courtesy, friend," said Joshua Fayle. "Doubtless we are favoured by thy visit rather than by one from the town guard. Must thee search *all* the house?"

"I am obliged to," answered the young man, doggedly. "The warrant admits of no exemption."

He looked towards Rebecca Fayle as he spoke, and his eyes were full of entreaty, as for pardon.

"Father," she said suddenly, "I know Captain Staunton. We have met before. May I speak with him alone?"

"Why, yes, child, if thee sees any reason," answered Joshua Fayle, peering at her curiously. "But his men will be impatient."

"Let them wait," said the captain—and again he flushed hotly. "I am at Mistress Fayle's service."

10 THE HANDSOME QUAKER

"I shall not detain thee long," she said, and her face was whiter than the ruffles on her gown. "Only speak with me an instant."

She led the way to an adjoining room fitted up as a library. Wax candles burned on the carved mantelpiece, where a triptych of Faith, Hope and Charity, gold-winged against the blue Italian skies, was sunk in the dark wood. A fire sparkled pleasantly in the grate; and a circle of chairs was drawn about it, as though an adjournment from the dining-room here was the usual thing.

"Captain Staunton," began the girl, and her hands clasped against her breast gave her attitude an air of despairing entreaty. "I am in a great strait, and thee can save me if thee wilt."

"I!" said the young man in a low voice. "I would sacrifice everything in the world except honour to serve you in the lightest way. You know that."

"It will not hurt thy honour."

"It is not to leave the house unsearched?"

"Nay, I would never ask thee that. And my father has nothing to fear; he is a loyal man." Her eyes drooped as she uttered the implied falsehood. "It is I, myself, thee can save from shame and disgrace."

"'Shame,'" he said, "'and disgrace!' What have these to do with you?"

She bowed her head before the sudden fear and anger in his voice, and her hands went up and covered her face.

"Shame," she said again, and suddenly burst into a low and terrible sobbing. "It will be shame to me and public disgrace if thee wilt not help me. There is some one—I love, hidden in my room. If thy soldiers find him, I shall die of it."

The young man started back, and over his face passed quickly horror, shame, anger, and incredulous despair.

"It is not true?" he said in a choking voice.

"It is true."

"I would have killed any one else who had told me such a thing. And I am to save your—lover?"

She rocked to and fro without answering him.

"My God!" he said. "I believed in you as I believed in heaven. And you tell me—this? Is it true, Rebecca?" His face changed and worked piteously. "Tell me it is not true—that it is a device to save your father—and his friend. Tell me, and we shall find some way."

He stretched his hands to her imploringly, but she still sobbed on with her face hidden.

"It is true," he heard her say under her breath.

The young man laughed out recklessly, with a sudden change of mood.

"Why, then," he said, "there goes my faith in

women! I shall not believe again, not for the mother's sake that bore me."

He swept an almost insolent bow to the weeping girl.

"Mistress Fayle's confidence shall be respected," he said in a high, unnatural voice. "I shall see that my fellows pass lightly over a room that should be so sacred. And now I shall say good-evening. My men are awaiting me."

Again his hat swept the ground, and as the door closed on him, Rebecca Fayle dropped into a chair, below the mild eyes of the Three Virtues, still as death, but with what seemed an indelible scarlet spot burnt into either cheek.

Her father found her a while later when he came to seek for her.

"The search is nearly over," he whispered, "and the danger is quite past. Thy friend has been forbearing indeed. Come with me to the dining-room, which they have already searched. In a little while they will be gone."

She passed the sentry in the corridor with a high head, lest any fear in her face should be seen, and a little later she heard Captain Staunton and his troops depart, as they had come, with a jingling of swords and clattering of horses' hoofs.

The prisoner was released as soon as they had left the house. When he took his young hostess's

hand in his, as he thanked them all, it was colder than a stone. He held it a moment close-clasped.

"It has been too much for you," he cried, in quick concern. "Forgive me. To-morrow night I leave you, and there will be no more danger. I am not worth what my friends suffer for me."

"Ah!" she answered, and her voice sounded heart-broken. "What does it matter that one poor common man or woman be lost and wrecked, so that such as thee be saved?"

"Why," he said, trying to read her eyes, "I am of the Republic, and believe in the brotherhood of men. Unless the country has need of me, I would not let one man, surely not one woman, bear my brunt."

"I am dead-tired," she said, and her voice was dull. "Sleep well, my Lord, to-night, and to-morrow go in safety. Only remember that one poor woman would have given all she held most dear for thy immunity."

He kissed her hand tenderly.

"I shall always remember it," he answered. "And do you, dear child, sleep well, for the trouble is over, and all is safe."

But the girl came to the breakfast table next morning with the face of a Medusa. The two dull red spots were yet in her cheeks, but the soft pallor of her tints had given place to leaden-grey, and her eyes looked as if they saw death.

Her father was full of concern, setting down her sick looks to the alarm of the night before. But the Handsome Quaker watched her with his bright, soft eyes, and forbore to comment upon the change in her. At last a word of her father's gave him the clue he sought.

"'Twas merciful we had thy friend Captain Staunton last night instead of the town guard. What did thee say to him, Rebecca, when he spoke with thee in the library?"

"I but asked his forbearance," said the girl with stiff lips.

"Mighty stern he looked over the work, but when he came near where the bird lay hidden, he hustled his men through their task as though it suited him ill to bring him and them to a rude searching of a young maid's room. To that we owe Friend Whittinghame's safety. How did thee come to know him, Rebecca?"

"I have met him in many places, among assemblies of our friends. He is an honest and noble gentleman——" For a minute pride stirred in the girl's face, and then faded off to dull apathy.

"Thy acquaintance with him was opportune," said her father.

A little later he left for his place of business in Patrick Street, after many admonitions to his guest that he should lie close during the day. At mid-

night a boat was to be in the river, which should carry him before day to a schooner lying at anchor beyond the forts.

But Joshua Fayle had hardly gone when the Handsome Quaker turned to his hostess.

"Now, madam," he said, "what is this you have done? You have saved me indeed, but at the cost of your own fortunes. Did you think I would permit it?"

Too weak to resist him, she but turned away her head and burst into bitter sobbing, which rent the heart of one ever tender to women and children to hear. With tenderness, with patience, but also by the power of will, he drew from her at last how she had saved him.

At the end the tears were in his own eyes.

"And you did this for me?" he said, amazed. "Stripped yourself of your brightest jewel before your lover that I might be safe. *Mon Dieu*, what courage, what devotion, what sacrifice!"

But even his praises and his kisses on her hands moved her nothing from the depths of her despair. She was as one innocently shamed and drowned in the horror of it.

"Tell me," he said at last, "why did you do so desperate a thing? Would not this lover of yours have saved me for your prayer without that?"

"I could not ask him to forfeit his honour. It

came to me in a flash that there was no other way."

"Except to destroy yourself! As if he or I were worth that!"

He bent to the ground before her.

"Happy is he who dies for a country that has such daughters!" he cried, with the theatrical air which was charming in him.

About dusk in the evening the Handsome Quaker was missing; but as Joshua Fayle had not yet returned, and Rebecca lay on her bed as she had lain since morning, in a dumb madness of shame and misery, his absence was not noticed for some time.

Before it was discovered, a tall stranger in a cloak had knocked for admittance at Captain Staunton's lodgings in the South Mall.

He knocked once or twice before he was answered, and then, being bidden to come in, he entered jauntily.

"Your business, sir?" asked the young man, who sat at a table busily writing, with an open case of pistols before him.

"My business? Why, as I take it, to keep the contents of an excellent brain-pan from being scattered," answered the new-comer, at the same time coolly laying his hand on the case of pistols.

Captain Staunton sprang up with an oath.

"You are an insolent meddler, sir, and you shall answer for it."

"Not till you have heard me."

The soft and merry brown eyes of the new-comer looked with an expression of benignant pity at the haggard young face of the soldier.

"You were going to kill yourself?"

"What if I was?"

Captain Staunton felt his heat evaporate before the born air of command in the stranger who was scarcely older than himself.

"What if I was? My life is my own to throw away when I desire to be done with it."

"You are wrong there, *mon ami*; your life belongs firstly to Him who gave it to you; secondly to your country; thirdly—I crave her pardon for putting her last—to the purest and most heroic of women."

"I know none such."

"You know Mistress Rebecca Fayle?"

"Who are you, sir, that dare mention her name?"

"Don't prick me when I tell you, for I see you still wear your sword. I am Edward, commonly called Lord Edward, Fitzgerald, known in certain circles in Cork as the Handsome Quaker."

"There is a warrant out for you. Why do you come here?"

"Into the lion's mouth, eh? Because I throw myself on your honour as an officer and a gentle-

man ; because—because it was I who hid in Mistress Rebecca's room last night."

"You! She said——"

"I know what she said, poor, brave, heroic child. She is as pure as my wife. It was a mad thing, but she thought it was the only way to save me, and your honour as a King's man as well."

"My God!"

"Thank Him that I came in time to night. You have yet a lifetime left in which to cherish her."

"You have put your life in peril to restore me my happiness."

"'Tis a soldier's lot to carry his life in his hands. And better I should lose mine many times over than miss my plain duty. I am safe with you?"

"I would die to defend you."

"Rank treason, *camarade*! Live rather for the lovely Rebecca."

"How can I forgive myself?"

"You were a dull dog and a bad lover to believe her. But *n'importe*! You will make your peace to-morrow. I shall tell her you will come. She is like a dead thing to-day."

"Let me come now."

"That would be to involve you in treason. As early to-morrow as you like. The Handsome Quaker will be well out on blue water by that time. *Au*

revoir, my friend. In happier times for this poor country we may meet again."

When he returned to Joshua Fayle's house he found it a scene of consternation, for he had been missed. He waved his host's questions aside with gay apologies.

"I have supped with a charming fellow," he said — "one Captain Staunton, an Englishman and a loyalist, but a gallant gentleman. He was our visitor of last night."

Under the eye of Joshua Fayle he stooped and kissed Rebecca on the cheek.

"There are roses," he said, "against your lover's coming to-morrow. He knows all; and comes in sackcloth, because he was dolt enough to believe you. Forgive him, for the sake of the Handsome Quaker!"

Then he turned to the bewildered Joshua.

"You have a daughter fair as well as heroic," he said, "and these are troublous times. It were well your loyalty were set beyond suspicion, and she in safer keeping than yours would be if you were suspected of harbouring rebels. Give her to Captain Staunton when he asks for her to-morrow; though, faith, I grudge her to any Saxon of them all."

That was the last visit to Cork of the Handsome Quaker.

THE POLITICIAN

BARTLE BRADY was a little, mild, old man, soft of voice, slow of speech, with a blue eye of an inflexible obstinacy.

"The dear knows," said his wife, "I might as well be talkin' to a stone wall as wastin' my time wid ye. So I'll just pray for you an' lave you to God."

"I wish you would, woman dear," Bartle responded. "It couldn't be worse nor havin' a woman wid a tongue like a hin, clackin' an' clappin' in wan's ears all the day long."

"The Lord be with the time there was no talk o' politics at all, at all," said Mrs. Brady, with acerbity. "'Twas then I had a spring onion an' a bit o' cabbage in the garden, let alone a handful o' flowers to stick in a jug. And now, sure, the place is fit for nothin' but pigs; an' there's a hole in the flure there that fills wid water whin it's rainin', an' that's nigh every day. It was the mercy o' Them above I didn't lose my finest little yallo' ducklin' in it a week ago come Tuesday; an' there it is still."

"I'd more to be attindin' to nor holes in the flure, woman," answered Bartle with dignity.

"Och, indeed, you had. You wor makin' a fool av yerself, as usual, below at the forge, talkin' over this thing an' that thing you don't understand, an' ought to lave to your betters."

"I'd always a head for politics," said Bartle, with unruffled calm.

"Goodness help your little wit," responded Mrs. Brady. "'Tis glad I am Nora's not here to see her father makin' a fool of himself in his ould age."

"Your daughter's more enlightened thin you, Mrs. Brady, ma'am," said Bartle with ironical politeness. "She'll understand about such things."

"Indeed then, the poor lamb!" cried Mrs. Brady. "'Twill be a nice sight for her to come home to find the little place gone to rack and ruin, and the cocks and hens roostin' in the garden, an' her foolish ould father rantin' below in the forge about things that don't concern him."

Bartle winced.

"There's plenty of time to put things to rights before Nora comes home," he answered. "An' I'll go bail she won't think the less of her father because he has a head for politics, an' knows his duty to his country."

"She won't find much comfort in the place," said Mrs. Brady bitterly, "after all she's sent into it too. There, 'tis no use talkin' to you. I don't know a worse curse nor politics, barrin' it's the drink."

Perhaps if Mrs. Brady had gone a different way with Bartle she might have done more. As it was, she only wounded the old fellow's vanity, and strengthened his natural obstinacy.

Still, as he went that evening on his way to the usual parliament in the village forge, he thought uneasily on his wife's words.

"Sure it won't do for Noreen," he said. "That gate 'll have to be mended, an' the garden fenced in agin' them dirty scratchin' divils of hins, an' a new coat o' thatch 'ud improve the look o' the cabin—indeed, there's a power to be done, but sure, plaze goodness, I'll be puttin' my shoulder to the wheel an' gettin' it done in next to no time."

Time had been when Bartle's cabin had been a really pretty sight. The place was freehold, and there had been the incentive of ownership to make Bartle work.

Nora Brady had grown up among pleasant sights and sounds. While she had been a child at home, her father had kept to the domestic hearth of evenings. After his day's work at Mr. Osborne's, he had not been too tired to work in his garden, tilling it and stocking it with flowers and vegetables, and training rose-bushes and creepers over the white walls, and the little green trellised porch.

He was an uncommonly handy man about a house, as his wife had been proud to say, and somehow he

had never found it dull at home, while Nora, with her long flaxen hair down her back, had sat in the chimney-corner studying her school-books assiduously, or in summer in the green porch within sight of him at his work.

Then came the time when a tree he was felling for Mr. Osborne crashed upon his leg, and left him an invalid for months, never to be so sound a man again.

It was then that Nora showed the stuff that was in her. Nora's convent school, where she was held in high esteem by the nuns, belonged to a teaching order that had a good many houses in America.

"Let Nora go, Mrs. Brady," said Sister Agatha, the managing woman of the convent. "Her old friend, Sister Pelagia, has the finest opening for her as a school-teacher, and it won't be like going among strangers. The salary is there waiting for her. Two hundred dollars! Think of it, Mrs. Brady. When would Nora get such a chance at home?"

"How much would that be in pounds, Sister dear?" asked Mrs. Brady practically.

"Well, not quite so much. Forty pounds. Still, forty pounds is a good deal."

"I never looked to see a little girl of mine earn the like. Sure, 'tis the grand eddication yez gave her. Yez wouldn't be wantin' her for a nun now?"

"Ask Nora, Mrs. Brady. I really don't think she has a bit of nun's flesh about her."

Nora shook her golden head, and the tear-drops on her long lashes twinkled.

"'Tis greedy after the money I am," she said, "to help you and my father over misfortune. But sure, there won't be a day I'll be in it that I won't be counting well gone till I'm back again."

Nora went on a beautiful spring day. It nearly broke the hearts of the old people to see her go. Bartle lay by the window with his leg propped up, and watched the bright little figure go heavily out of sight at last.

It had been an intolerable parting. Half-a-dozen times Nora had rushed back to kiss her father, till at last she must go, and go quickly, or she would lose the long car which was to take her to the town where she would catch the train.

Mrs. Brady went with her across the fields to the stile into the road where the car passed. All the hedges were white with hawthorn, and the cuckoo was calling from every coppice. When they reached the stile there was still a minute or two to spare. Nora leant her bundle and a little trunk on top of the stile.

"God send there'll be no change when I come back again," she said in a heart-breaking voice.

"We'll be older, acushla bawn," said the mother;

"but sure, God in His mercy 'll bring us all together again."

"Five years, mother—oh, think of it!—five years," moaned the girl.

"Don't go, asthoreen, then. Stay with us, and be the light of our eyes. Sure, we'll manage somehow."

The girl looked at her for an instant wildly. Then the horn of the long car was heard in the distance.

"No, don't tempt me," she cried. "We should only starve together. Good-bye, motherreen, good-bye. I'll write every week, and send home all I can spare."

It was, perhaps, the loneliness for Nora that made Bartle take to politics, as another man might take to the bottle. His leg mended in time, and was a better job than the doctor had expected, considering Bartle's years. He was a good man for light work still, and Mr. Osborne, who was kind to the poor, found enough jobs about the stables and gardens to keep him going pretty well all the year, when he was inclined for work.

But the five years were a weary time to look forward to, and though Nora's letters and remittances came with unfailing regularity, the light seemed to have gone out of the house with her golden head.

Little by little Bartle went more and more to the gatherings that discussed the doings of men and monarchs, in the village street, or about the open

forge in summer, in the public-house in winter, outside the chapel-gates on Sundays and holidays.

Even in the public-house Bartle never drank, so that his reproach to his wife, "Don't I bring you home all I earn, and drink none of it?" was well founded.

Though he was fond of taking a day off now and again, with the excuse of shooting-pains in "th' ould leg of him," Bartle earned enough to keep himself and his wife in decent poverty.

After the first, when their need had been great, Mrs. Brady had religiously put by the greater part of the money Nora sent them.

"It will be a little nest-egg for herself by and by, when she comes home to us," she would think. "Sure you wouldn't know but 'twould come in handy then, for she's too clever a child to spend her days foostherin' about a bit of a cabin, when she might be makin' a little stir in the world."

"Nora 'll be marryin' on you, Mrs. Brady," a gossip would say now and again.

"'Deed then, she'll not marry out there," the mother would reply with conviction, "or if she does, she'll come home all the same. She wouldn't have th' ould father and mother of her waitin' for her all these years only to play them such a dirty thrick in the ind."

"Dirty thrick, ma'am!" the gossip would cry,

obtuse or ill-natured. "Why, sure you wouldn't have her say no to wan o' them fine gintlemin over there wid acres of shirt-front and a yard o' gold chain meanderin' over his bosom! It isn't likely they wouldn't be askin' her, a fine, clane, purty, clever little girl."

"She's all that, ma'am," the mother would respond, mollified. "An' I'm not sayin' but what offers she has by the score. Still, she'll come back to us—she'll come back, never fear, whin her five years is up, plase God, an' that'll be next Whitsuntide."

It was April now, and Whitsuntide only a few weeks away, yet the Bradys' little house that Nora had carried in her heart, rose-covered and golden-roofed, for so many years, was still in its ruinous state of disrepair.

Still the garden was given over to the fowls, not Mrs. Brady's only, but the neighbours', for the good woman hadn't the heart to be chasing them out of it.

She did herself what she could to keep the little place together, but it was listlessly she worked this spring, which she had used to see in her dreams like the promised land. Her white hair grew thinner and more dishevelled, her shrewd, kindly face looked so harassed and worn and grey that you were reminded of a russet apple showing through heavy dust. She was wounded to the very heart at the thought that

Nora was coming home to such a slatternly and unlovely house in place of what she remembered.

Bartle was past arguing with. He could no more keep away from the speech-making and expounding and laying down the law, and the rounds of half-ironical applause, than the drunkard can keep from his dram.

"Boys, boys," said Mrs. Brady one day to a couple of leading spirits among the village politicians, "why will yez be leadin' that foolish ould man astray? His head's turned, so it is, wid the talk an' the nonsense, so that he's neglected his little house this many a day, an' he's beginnin' to neglect his work. If Mr. Osborne's patience gives out wid him, I don't know what we'll do at all, at all."

"Is it true that Nora's coming home, Mrs. Brady?" asked Patsy Kenny, one of the youths, irrelevantly.

"It is then, Patsy, but sure 'tis the sorrowful place she's comin' to. I've done what I could, but I'm only a poor, rheumatic ould woman, an' even if Bartle was brought to his sinses this minit, there wouldn't be time to make the little place anything like what it was."

"I suppose not," said Patsy Kenny thoughtfully.

"I do be tellin' th' ould man," went on Mrs. Brady, "that it's goster and talk yez have. Maybe 'tis uncivil of me to mention it to you, Patsy Kenny, an'

you're a dacent boy if you'd give over politics. But 'tis my opinion it's ups and downs, ups and downs, all the time. I'm an ould woman now, an' maybe half-a-dozen times in my life there's been the same goin's-on. Ireland was always *goin'* to be free, and she's just the same way to-day, only perhaps a little better. I tell him she'll be free whin all her childher wants it, not whin wan part's fightin' another part."

"Why, ma'am, you're as great a politician as Bartle."

"Goodness forgive you, Patsy. Wan politician in the family is enough, and more than enough, the Lord knows. But I'm tired of the splits an' broils. 'Don't tell me,' I says to him, 'that Mr. Osborne, aye, or Lord Cloneevin, isn't as good Irishmen as any of yez, an' hasn't the good o' the country at heart the same as any of yez.' 'Begor, woman,' he says, 'if I agreed wid you, I'd drop agitatin' altogether.'"

"He said that, did he?"

"He did. But sure, if the Lord doesn't change his heart, nothin' else will. He's a terrible obstinate ould man. If the whole of yez went over he wouldn't go a step."

Patsy Kenny went away thoughtful. As he and his companion strolled down the lane, past the holy well, with its thorn-bush hung with votive rags, he still kept silence.

"Musha, what's wrong wid you, Patsy?" asked his companion at last.

"Well then, I'll tell you. I was thinkin' 'twould be a fine joke to play off on ould Bartle, to make him believe we wor all turned Conservative. 'Tis yourself is the play-boy could do it, Mick Cassidy."

The other turned on him a pair of bright brown eyes, and his wide, thin mouth grinned appreciatively.

"If you wance got that into his ould head, the divil ever he'd get it out again."

"What matter?"

"Och, sure, what matter? He's only an ould wind-bag, but he gives us a bit of fun. Still, it 'ud be worth it all to see him givin' us all the go-by as stags an' thraitors."

"It would so."

"Is it all by way of a joke, Patsy?"

"All by way of a joke," answered the other faintly.

"Nora Brady was a rale purty little girl."

"She was that."

"You an' she used to have a kindness for aich other."

"Maybe we did."

"I tell you what, Patsy, it's a shame, so it is, to be makin' the ould man foolish an' destroyin' the ould woman's peace o' mind, an' maybe makin' little Nora unhappy into the bargain, an' doin' no good at all by it."

"Maybe you're right, Mick."

"Och, you villain of the world, don't you know I'm right? What would you be after desavin' your best friend for?"

Patsy Kenny responded to this jocularly with a smile and a blush which became him mightily.

There was a little more talk, and the two parted.

The next evening, as Bartle was drinking his tea, preparatory to going to the usual place, Patsy Kenny strolled in.

"You'll be goin' my way," said Bartle; "so you may as well wait for me."

"Well then, I'm not—not this evenin'," answered Patsy Kenny. "I'm gettin' tired o' the politics. They don't seem to lade anywhere."

"I hope you're not goin' to renaige the cause," said Bartle, with a stern eye.

"Och, I'll be a good Irishman wherever I'm found. 'Tis a different thing with you, Mr. Brady; you're the fine speech-maker. But me—I'm only a stick in the bundle and won't be missed for wance in a way. But what I came down to say was, that if you'd like a bit o' straw to be mendin' the roof, I've some of the finest left over from last thrashin', an' you're welcome to it."

"I'm obliged to you, Patsy."

"Don't mention it, Mr. Brady. Another thing I wanted to say was, that I'd give you a hand in the

evenin' wid the thatchin'. It's maybe not so aisy for you to be gettin' about on ladders since you had the leg bad."

"I'm sure 'tis very kind of you, boy. But you've plenty to do on your own little farm."

"The busiest time is over till the haymakin' comes. An' 'tis lonely there by myself of evenin's, wid only a dog to spake to, or ould deaf Biddy, that doesn't hear a word I say to her. 'Twould be a kindness to let me drop in of an evenin' an' potter about the place."

"Indeed, then, you're heartily welcome. A bit o' young life about the place 'll be rale pleasant."

"I hear you've Nora comin' home," said the young man, blushing ingenuously.

"So she is. She's to sail in less nor a month's time."

"She'll be different to what she was when she left."

"Indeed, then," said Mrs. Brady, speaking for the first time, "she'll be just the same good, gentle little girl. She's longin' to be back. 'Tis plain to see her heart's in th' ould place. You remember Nora, Patsy? You were only a bit of a boy when she left."

"We used to play hop-scotch together, an' many's the time I held her skippin'-rope."

"To be sure you did. You're nearly the wan age, Patsy."

"There's a couple o' year on my side."

"Is there now? A little girl grows up sooner nor a little boy. Nora was rale sensible when she went away, an' you were only a gorsoon. Are you goin', Bartle?"

"Oh, aye, I'm off," said old Bartle, with the dogged air of one who expects opposition; but his wife offered none.

"I'll send over the straw to-morrow," said Patsy Kenny, without showing any sign of moving. "An' if the evenin's fine you an' me 'll start at the roof—that is, if the boys can spare you. If not, I'll start by myself."

"Och, the Lord reward you, Patsy Kenny," said Mrs. Brady, when Bartle had disappeared. "You wor the kind-hearted boy always. 'Twould be the blessin' of heaven if you could keep him at home now and again."

"Maybe Mick Cassidy 'll do that for you," answered Patsy Kenny enigmatically. "But as I'm here, I may as well be fencin' in that garden o' yours. I've some elegant cabbage-plants spoilin' for want o' some wan to take them. I might as well be stickin' a few rows o' them here."

Patsy was still cheerily mending the broken fence, when he saw Bartle coming along the road.

"Here's Bartle coming home to you, Mrs. Brady," he called out. "He doesn't keep late hours anyway."

"Why, what's come to the man?" cried the good woman, appearing at her door. "Sorra ever I knew him to come home before, till he was turned out o' Keogh's at the closin' hour—that is, since he took up wid them unlucky politics. Why, sure enough, here he is, an' comin' rale slow. What's the matter wid him?"

Mrs. Brady's solicitude led her out in the road to meet Bartle, but as he advanced he kept his air of profound dejection, and when at last he was obliged to take notice of her, it was only to wave her from his path.

He went into the house unheeding her questions. Then he flung himself into his wooden chair, and taking a number of newspapers from his pocket he dashed them on the table, and hid his face in his arms.

"Why, what's come to you, man?" asked his wife, alarmed. "Mr. Osborne hasn't been givin' ye the sack?"

"The villians!" cried Bartle, lifting his face. "The base, cowardly thraitors an' desavers!"

"Who to goodness are you talkin' about?"

"Thim min, thim laiders of ours. Aye, the very boys that often I stirred wid my words. You wor right, though you're only a woman; for wance, mind you, you wor right. They've renaiged Home Rule an' gone over bag and baggage to the inimy."

"The divil a bit better I expected of them," said Mrs. Brady, energetically.

Bartle's eyes suddenly rested on Patsy Kenny, who, half alarmed at the success of what he guessed to be Mick Cassidy's plot, was standing in the doorway.

"Come here, my honest Patsy," he cried, in his best speechifying manner. "You knew what was in the wind, an' that is why you wor here to-night, instead of below in the town."

Patsy couldn't deny it, and didn't.

"It isn't Sleeveenarinka alone" (Sleeveenarinka was the village), went on Bartle in a tragic voice. "I'm told the country's gone. Just take that paper an' read a bit for me. Mick Cassidy gev me a bundle o' them to take home. Read it, my boy. The ould sight o' me 's failin', though I can make out *United Ireland* at the top of it."

Patsy took the paper and looked at in wonder. It had an oddly unfamiliar appearance, but in a minute the whole thing flashed on him. It was the *Dublin Evening Mail*, with the heading of *United Ireland* carefully pasted on.

"Read it, man—read it," cried Bartle impatiently.

Patsy began to read. The leading article which the old man's shaking finger had indicated was a clever series of gibes at the desire fo Home Rule, and the movement to win it.

"Faith, they've done it well," cried Bartle, almost choking with rage as Patsy proceeded. "They're gone over bag and baggage, an' the lads below at Sleeve-narinka the deuce a bit better. O, the villians of the world, the black hearts, the schamin' traitorous scoundrels!"

"Don't get yourself into such a state of excitement, Bartle," said Mrs. Brady. "Sure it doesn't surprise me at all, at all. I always expected it."

"There never was anything, however surprisin', happened, but what a woman expected it," said Bartle, with biting satire. "Take another o' thim papers an' read a bit of it. I want to sample them all before I commit them to the flames."

There were half-a-dozen papers, and the same trick had been played with each. The heading of the Nationalist newspapers had been placed over columns in which extreme rancour towards the national claims found expression.

"An' now," said Bartle, when the last of them had been sampled, "stick 'em there on the hearth, an' put a match to them, my boy. An' now, Mary Brady," as the *auto-da-fé* was completed, "you have your wish, woman. I'm done wid politics from this hour, an' well you know that what Bartle Brady says you may swear to."

"Indeed, then, Bartle, you wor always a man of your word," cried the delighted Mrs. Brady.

"But mind you," said Bartle, eyeing her severely. "No more 'I told you so's.' Them's hateful words in a woman's mouth."

Mrs. Brady was ready to promise anything, and the result of Mick Cassidy's joke was that Bartle went no more to the village. His evenings instead were spent in trying to repair the ravages of long neglect before Nora should come home.

With steady assistance from Patsy Kenny, much was done. They could not, indeed, restore the roses and woodbines, which the goats had eaten, nor bring many flowers to perfection in the short space of time left them, but certain plots of gaily-flowering plants, roots, clay and all, Patsy Kenny transferred from his own little farmhouse garden to Bartle Brady's. The roof was mended, the porch painted, the holes in the floor filled in, the house white-washed, and the garden was as full as it could hold of cabbage-plants, with other vegetables pushing their heads above the clay.

Certainly, when Nora Brady saw the house under its big chestnut-tree, and backed by a purple hill, one lovely May evening, she was little disposed to find fault with it.

She had been an hour or two at home, and the old people hadn't yet got tired of looking at the trim little figure in its blue gown, and the sweet face a little tired and faded by the hot suns and cold

winds of five years, when Patsy Kenny appeared at the half-door.

He looked in shyly, and then made a movement as if to retire.

"Come in, Patsy," cried Bartle and his wife together. "Here's Nora longin' to see you."

Patsy came in, feeling all legs and arms, and having shaken hands with Nora, sat down in his accustomed seat in the chimney corner. Nora glanced at him from under her long lashes. He was handsome and honest-looking, this friend of her childhood, and somehow it made her glad to see him sitting there like one of themselves.

"You'll be full o' book-larnin'," said Patsy Kenny timidly, in the course of the evening.

"She has that," answered her father proudly, "but she has more nor that. Where she was livin' in the woods she larnt to milk a cow, an' bake a cake, an' make butter wid the best o' them."

"She'd make a rale good farmer's wife," said Patsy Kenny, and then looked very shy when he had said it, but for some cause or another Nora looked shyer still.

Bartle kept his promise of having no more to do with politics. Even after the joke played upon him had come to Father O'Byrne's ears, and the priest insisted on Mick Cassidy making confession to Bartle, Bartle remained unmoved.

"'Tis all very well for you to say it was your thricks an' your divilment, Micky, my boy," he said with his old obstinacy. "Sure, I saw it with my own eyes, lasteways with Patsy's there, that's comin' to be like my own. There's jokes and jokes, but that was no joke. Didn't I see it in prent?"

And from that attitude there was no shaking him.

A CASTLE IN SPAIN

MISS HONORA DESMOND was very proud of her arched foot, her little ears and her long slender hands, because those features of hers were especially patrician.

The people shook their heads over Honora's pride, calling her by her name behind her back, as only the most vulgar had ever presumed to before her face. By and by it would be "ould Honora"; but though Miss Desmond would never see thirty-eight again, there was something of youth and grace about her that forbade the cruel adjective except to the least sensitive.

Honora was still a very pretty woman. Milky skin with a few golden freckles on it. Dark blue eyes. Bronze-coloured hair with a ripple where it was drawn back from the temples. Fine haughty little features and a stately carriage. These had often made the sympathetic stranger curious over the post-mistress of Coolafin; for Honora filled this not very magnificent position.

The peasants, to give them their due, admitted that Honora had a right to hold her head high.

Sure every one knew that she was descended in a straight line without a break from one of the great Munster Fitzmaurices who had lost everything in the Desmond rebellion. Only the ill-natured ventured to say that Honora's grandmother had sung and sold ballads in the streets of Cork. What if she had then? She wasn't the first lady who had come low in the world, aye, and died in that terrible place, the poor-house, for the matter of that.

Yet for all her pride Honora was not one to swing uncomfortably between heaven and earth. She had no hankerings after fine society. The only resident gentry within miles were Sir John Moffat and his lady, a prosy elderly couple without children. Lady Moffat was very fond of Honora, and occasionally had her company to tea. Honora was very fond of her in return—she was the only one who ever called Honora “my dear”—and was not elated by her friendship, always remembering that the first Moffat to take root in Irish soil was a Cromwellian trooper.

None had ever sought Honora's hand in marriage. Some had looked and longed no doubt, for Honora was an inviting morsel of feminine humanity; but there! the people among whom she lived would as soon have thought of aspiring to Lady Moffat's daughter, if she had had one, and would have had about as much chance of an alliance in the one direction as in the other.

Yet Honora was not at all averse from visiting about at the houses of those who in the ordinary course of things would have been her social equals. She liked her tea and a quiet game of cards at Miss Doran, the shopkeeper's, or Andrew Kerrigan's, the farmer's, quite as well as she did her visits to Lady Moffat. But she carried her own atmosphere with her wherever she went, and it was very seldom that any one was rough or violent in her presence.

"Stuck-up" she might be, but it was only those who had not the natural good-breeding who found her refinement irksome. To her poor neighbours she was very good, and especially in any case of sickness, and more especially in the case of a sick child. Honora's passion was for children. The cry of a child was like a sword in her heart. The laughter of children was the sweetest music in the world to her ears.

Many a time while she washed and dressed the child of a poor neighbour, the mother, looking at her from her pillow with admiring helplessness, would murmur:

"Sure 'tis a thousand pities you haven't got a house-ful of them."

Perhaps it was a dispensation of Providence in favour of the children of Coolafin that Honora did not have a house-ful of them. Still, as the women had dimly divined, it was one of the tragedies of life

that a born mother like Honora should remain a spinster while the unworthy and the unloving entered into the kingdom.

Her little house was outside the village, with a long, narrow grass-field sloping up to the door. The field pastured a goat who gave Honora milk for her tea, and afforded a deal of nourishment as well to the children of Coolafin.

The troubled moments of Honora's life were when a careless visitor to the post-office would leave the little gate ajar that divided the goat's pasture from Honora's little flower and vegetable garden. Then Honora would desert her post of duty and fly to the rescue of her sweet-peas and pinks, and since Nannie had a most elusive way with her, it was a task of some difficulty to get her within bounds again, especially if Honora had to do it unaided.

It was a soft summer day strayed into December, and Honora was very busy with her Christmas parcel-post, when Nannie was discovered cropping the wallflowers and the little winter aconites outside the post-office window. Honora dropped her sealing-wax and string and flew to the rescue.

As she rushed through the doorway she nearly collided with a tall stranger entering.

"Oh, I beg your pardon," she said. "Will you please to wait a minute till I drive the goat out of the garden. She will not leave me a single wallflower."

"Allow me to assist you," said the stranger, turning with her.

He was a tall, lean, dark man, and he seemed to move with such a dignified slowness that Honora had very little hope of his proving a useful ally. Indeed, Nannie was very aggravating that day, and it was quite a long time before they succeeded in chasing her out of the garden, and back to her own domain, where Honora secured her by a penitential stake and chain which Nannie had no difficulty at all in pulling out of the earth when it suited her.

"Oh dear," sighed Honora, as they re-entered the house, "it is half-past three, and the mail-car will be here in a second."

"Can I help?" asked the stranger.

His voice had a rich sweetness, and though the English came readily enough to his tongue, it was plainly to be seen that it was not his own language.

Honora looked at him and hesitated. The rattle of wheels coming up the hill-side was heard in the quiet air.

"If you would be so good as to secure this bag for me. There seems so many of them. Dear, dear, who would ever believe there could be so much present-giving in a poor place like this!"

The stranger tied the neck of the bag securely while Honora held it. His long hands were not unlike her own, although they had the masculine

strength and size. He watched her as she sealed it, bending over it, while the high north light shone as in a mirror on her hair rippled like water. He was ready to tie the next bag for her. They were too busy for conversation, except for the moment when Honora lifted her eyes to his face, and he had a sense of looking into beds of violets.

"Have you a letter to post, sir?" she asked him.

"No," he answered. "I came here to obtain some information if I could."

The foot of the mail-car driver was heard crunching the gravel outside.

"Please step inside and wait till I can speak to you," said Honora, hastily indicating the door by her side. Perhaps she had a sudden thought that the presence of the stranger behind, and not in front, of the little counter, might seem to need explanation.

He passed within the little parlour. A handful of fire burned in the grate. One little window looked down the hill, and to a distance which the mild sun and the diamond haze had turned to the gates of heaven. The other looked over a flower and vegetable and fruit garden, which in summer had an undue preponderance of flowers, thought the neighbours.

Over the chimney-piece was a very old engraving of a gentleman, long-faced, aquiline-featured, with a little

pointed beard and serious gentle eyes. His hand on his sword-hilt gave him a warlike air, despite his eyes and his sensitive mouth. The stranger started when he saw it. He peered closely at the inscription beneath it, which set forth that it represented the most excellent Sir James Fitzmaurice.

"So they are not forgotten," he murmured to himself, and then glanced impatiently towards the door, at the other side of which Honora was still engaged in her official duties.

He looked around the room while one foot tapped the clay floor. A canary, on whose cage the sun fell, was singing shrill and sweet, stopping now and again between little love-calls, as though he waited for an answer; then, none coming, he himself feigned the returning call. He had intuitions of the days before the captivity of his race.

The furniture in the room was very old, but every piece beautiful, even while it crumbled. The corner cupboard with its few ancient pieces of glass and china, the old piano with its red satin back to the ceiling, the Sheraton table, the old tall clock in the corner—all had a delightful air of austere beauty. Winter violets grew in a pot on the table, and penetrated the air with their subtle message of spring. On the mantel-shelf were the quaintest ornaments, and a few old daguerreotypes. The Lady Poverty here wore her very sweetest aspect.

Then Honora came in at the doorway, coloured like a flame, and the naked, beautiful room was all at once transformed. She was wearing a kind of sacque, bunched over a scarlet petticoat. It was the fashion of twenty years ago in the world outside Coolafin, but it recalled a greater age. The lady of Sir James Fitzmaurice might have worn her stately garments somewhat after the same fashion.

"Now, sir," said Honora, briskly, "how can I help you?"

The stranger bowed profoundly.

"I have come from Spain," he said. Why, he had the very eyes and beard of Don Quixote! "Three hundred years ago my people left this place. Spain has owned us for so long. Ah, yes, when the history of Spain is written, there is always one of us on the page. But the race dwindles. There is only now myself, Miguel Fitzmaurice, and my children, little ones. Something impelled me to come back to see if here in the cradle of my race I might discover some of my kin."

Honora went quite pale with excitement.

"Don Miguel," she said. By sheer accident she had given him his proper title. "Don Miguel, I think we must be cousins. I am Honora Desmond, and I too am alone in the world."

"Ah," he said, "I commended myself to St. James of Compostella before I started. How well he has

guided me. Allow me to kiss your hands, my cousin."

He took the two work-worn, yet beautiful hands in his, and imprinted the most reverent of kisses upon them. Honora smiled and blushed. It did not occur to her to think that he had not noticed the poverty of her surroundings, the humility of her position.

"And you are alone, dear friend," he said, leading her to a chair as though he took her out in some stately dance. "Alone, as I am, except for the little ones. How does it come that you are alone?"

"My mother died ten years ago. I was the only child. She was the only child of the Lady Fitzwalter of Desmond." This was the ballad-singing lady. "Since we have become poor we gave up using the title. Ah!"

There was a tapping as with a coin on the little counter outside, and with a murmur of apology Honora left him. Some one required a penny stamp, a very young lady apparently, who having made the enormous purchase was inclined to give the post-mistress the history of all the family of nine, younger than herself.

While Honora was gently releasing herself, her newly-found relation in the inner room was fretting and fuming, muttering rolling words between his

teeth, for which may St. James of Compostella obtain him forgiveness !

At last she came in, sparkling and smiling.

"It was a little child," she said. "She wanted to tell me about the others. I have nursed most of them through their little illnesses."

"But you should not have to obey when they come knocking, knocking," he said gloomily. "You are a Fitzmaurice of Desmond."

"I have to do it to live," she answered.

His eyes leaped at her. Then he averted them as though he had placed a strong control over himself.

"My wife," he said, "Donna Mercedes, has been dead these three years. She prayed when she was dying that St. James might send me a good wife, a good mother to her children."

"Ah ! You have children ? What a comfort that must be !"

"Yes, they help. But even with them it is lonely. I have their pictures, if you would wish to see them."

He took from his pocket a little case and opened the lid. There was the wife, a handsome, smooth-skinned Spaniard, ripe as a ripe peach.

Honora glanced at her, and touched the glass above the pictured face, as though she caressed the living. Then she looked at the children side by side ; two little boys with close-cropped black heads

and round black eyes, and a baby in a white frock on the lap of a be-ribboned Spanish nurse.

"Ah!" she sighed, "how hard for her to leave them!"

Again she touched the glass over the pictured face of the dead woman tenderly, but her eyes travelled on to the children and were hungry.

"I have never seen any one since, till I saw you, to whom I would give Mercedes' children in trust. You, alas, dear friend, if you were not so young and beautiful—you might rule my house. As it is the conventions forbid it."

"Young and beautiful!" Honora lifted her hand to the wave of her hair, and laughed, and blushed. "Where are your eyes, Don Miguel? I am nearly forty, and there are grey hairs in my head."

"I do not see them," said Don Miguel, looking at her seriously. "And if they were there they would but make you more beautiful, very beautiful to a Spaniard, who is not accustomed to golden beauty like yours."

Honora's hand still held the case with the portraits. Her eyes went back to the little faces. Alas, the woman who had had to leave them! Was it because they were of her kin that she yearned over them, even more than she was used to do with children?

"I am commended to a gentleman here, Sir John Moffat, but I have lodged myself meanwhile at the

inn in your town. I shall make a little stay, I think, now that I have found you, my cousin. There is so much to see—their castles, their abbeys, the graves that hold their precious dust. I want to carry it all back to Spain in my heart.”

“They are not likely to be forgotten,” said Honora. “Their castles are on every crag, and Time deals gently with them.”

A day or two later Don Miguel Fitzmaurice transferred his belongings from the Desmond Arms to Sir John Moffat’s house.

Such a devout pilgrim to the shrines of his ancestors never was. His piety towards his race extended to the living as well as the dead, for it was plainly to be seen that from the very beginning he thought Honora Desmond peerless among women.

At first he had not so much of her society as he desired. Her official duties claimed her to his deep indignation. Then there came a day when a pallid young woman from Dublin arrived to take Honora’s place, and learn the duties of the position.

Coolafin was rather perturbed by it. It was not accustomed to changes, but gradually it leaked out that Honora was to accompany the Spanish gentleman to Seville to look after his children.

“You’ll like your new place, Miss Honora?” asked one of the gossips a little curiously. Miss Desmond, who had never confided in Coolafin, seemed likely to

leave it without being more outspoken. "It's the grand wages they'll be giving you to make it worth your while to go from the post-office."

Honora dimpled delightfully.

"'Tis the grand wages, Mary Shea," she repeated. "Grander wages than I ever looked to get in all my life."

"Still, it wouldn't be them that 'ud be takin' you out of it." Mary Shea's curiosity was yet unslaked. "Of course you're goin' to your own people in a manner o' spakin'; yet 'tis a new place after all, an' you've been in Coolafin all your days, an' the post-office is a terrible stirrin' place. Maybe 'tis the childher is takin' you?"

"I thought at first it was, Mary," replied Honora enigmatically, "but after all it was the wages. The wages were something I couldn't do without."

"See that now, an' you a single woman too, with none but yourself to do for, Miss Honora," commented the gossip, rather scandalized.

A little later, when the news came to Coolafin that Miss Desmond had married her cousin, Mary Shea shook her head over her own dulness.

"Sure, 'twas a different kind o' wages altogether was in our minds," she said. "I can see now, 'twas the fondness the Don had for her she was thinkin' about. They say that he thinks there was never the likes of her for beauty, for all that she's but five

years younger than my own mother. An' 'tis the grand lady she is, with a castle in Spain, an' th' ould Fitzmaurice Castle above that he bought for a weddin' present for her. Yet they say 'twas the thought of havin' the childher to herself drew her first to say yes to him."

THE WIDOWER

THE fate of Tom Hanrahan and his children was on the mind of every woman in the Glens Valley. Eily was dead six months, and the man went still with his head on his breast, and his eyes on the ground. Sorrow and trouble it was to every kind heart to see him and the little children that were able to walk taking the dreary way to Eily's grave on a Sunday. On week-days he worked as hard as his poor health would allow him, and made but little of the boggy land and the exhausted potato-seed. He was always unlucky, was Tom Hanrahan, through no fault of his own at all, poor man.

Six little children Eily had left him with, the eldest but eight, the youngest a wee baby. Little Kitty, the small woman of the house, did her best by the young family, but she was Tom Hanrahan's own daughter, a delicate slip of a thing, and unchildish in taking trouble to heart, her own or any one else's.

Every one liked poor Tom Hanrahan. It was well known that before he and Eily took each other he

might have married a rich woman over to Carnaduff, but though the matchmakers were ready, Thomas Hanrahan would have none of their offices. Eily too was a pretty bit of a thing, and might have done well in marriage. Many a settled man able to give her a jaunting-car and a best parlour might have overlooked the fact that she hadn't a cow or a feather bed to her fortune. But Eily never gave them the chance. She was hardly out of the nuns' school when she and Tom Hanrahan fell in love with each other, and, God help them, poor foolish things! they married for love, and with little else but love to live upon. It was thirty years since there had been a marriage for love in Glena Valley, and everyone knows that such marriages turn out badly. The substance and the comfort are the things to think of in marriage. What good is love to an empty stomach and a cold hearth? And it is worse when the children come, for the greatest of love will not put a crust in their mouths or fire on the cold hearth for them.

That is the wisdom of Glena; but Eily Hanrahan never agreed to it. When she was dying, bless you! she kept stroking her man's hand, saying that he was the best man ever lived, and that his love had been heaven to her. Heaven, *inagh!* with the rain coming through the roof and oozing through the floor, and the meal low in the bag, and the rent-day

coming. If the heaven Eily Hanrahan was going to was no better than the one she was leaving, God help us all!

Tom Hanrahan, despite the unluckiness of everything, had been an easy, soft-smiling man while Eily lived. But from the day she left him he had a pinched look as if he had been turned out shivering from a warm fire into the cold; and if his strength before was hardly equal to the stony and boggy land, he didn't seem now half the man he had been for that unending struggle.

The neighbours, to be sure, were very good. The poor are the best friends of the poor, and Kitty could never have filled the little hungry mouths only for the bit of griddle-cake, or the few potatoes, or the cup of milk for the baby, that one or another was always bringing. Tom Hanrahan knew nothing of these gifts. It would have gone hard with him to feel that he was taking from them that had little enough for themselves. So 'twas a secret between Kitty and the neighbours—and indeed, poor man, it was easy to deceive him. Be sure nobody grudged the bit they could spare to the motherless children, but many indeed wished it had been a thousand times more.

Tom Hanrahan drudged along, happy enough in his melancholy fashion, or at least happy by comparison with what was to follow. It was

glorious young spring weather, and the handful of field flowers on Eily's grave were dancing in the south wind, when one day a number of neighbouring women—a "depitation" they called themselves—waited on Tom Hanrahan.

He was just going home rather dispiritedly to Kitty. He had pulled up a root of his potatoes, and though potatoes were well forward, and that was a kindly year, you could see nothing worse. They were no bigger than marbles, and had spots of purple and green in them, like a bruise a month old.

He was carrying a few of them in his hand to show to Kitty. He had learned to turn for consolation to Eily's daughter, now Eily was gone, and to see the child listening to him, and comforting and coaxing him out of himself, you'd say the mother's heart had gone into her.

But half-way across the bawn he saw the crowd of women with their Sunday cloaks on and their stiff white caps crowding into his little cabin, and for some reason he couldn't tell, his heart sank.

When he came in with that odd sense of wonder and dismay, he forgot clean what he carried in his hand, but Mary Casey, a managing woman and the leader of the "depitation," was not without seeing.

"God save all here!" said Tom, with an air of ease he was far from feeling.

"God save you, honest man," said the women, who sat round like so many white-headed crows.

Little Kitty had set them all the stools the cabin contained, and a couple of them leant up against the meal-chest, and one was by the dresser. As Tom entered, Kitty came out of the corner into which she had crept and over to his side. Tom was conscious of a strange inhospitable longing that the good neighbours were gone, and that he and his little girl had the cabin to themselves once more. To themselves, for the baby didn't count lying on his back in the potato-cleeve that did for a cradle, and laughing up at the bit of blue sky that looked through a hole in the thatch. The baby was thriving, God bless him! and the other children were out all the day roaming the bog-land, by way of minding Cushua, the old cow that was the most valuable thing Tom Hanrahan owned.

"How are the pitaties with you, Tom, my man?" asked Mary Casey.

Tom started, and looked down at those in his hand. Mechanically his hand closed on them as he answered:

"I've not started to diggin' yet, nor won't these five weeks."

"I was thinkin' by what you wor carryin' you wor maybe samplin' them."

"So I was," said Tom, guiltily. "Seein' yez put it out o' my mind."

"They don't look over-promisin'."

"No, more they don't," said Tom.

"What are yez goin' to do for the winter, yerself an' the childher?"

"Och, the Lord knows," said Tom, with a shadow of dismay creeping up his white face, as you may see the cloud-shadows creeping up the walls on an overcast and gloomy day.

"Well, Tom," said Mary Casey, "we've been thinkin' a dale of you in your trouble. Your misfortune has lain on many a heart."

"Thankful I am to you, Mrs. Casey," answered Tom, wondering what was coming next.

"Sure you have everyone's good will, and so had Eily too. God rest her. 'Twas she was the fond wife and mother."

"She was so," said the widower, with something like a spasm crossing his face.

"Still, Tom, ahagur, you can't keep frettin' for her for ever. Sure she's better off, and you've the childher to be thinkin' of."

Tom stared and wondered again what was coming.

"Tom," went on Mary Casey, solemnly, "we're your friends, an' you must take what we say in good part. You're killin' yourself, man, tryin' to get out o' the land what was never in it. An' sure Eily herself 'ud be the first to bid you put everything out of

your head, except the good of yourself and the childher."

"She would so," assented Tom, seeing that Mary Casey paused for an answer.

The spokeswoman brightened visibly, and all the other women wagged their frilled caps. Mary drew a long breath before she spoke again.

"You've paid proper respect to the memory of her that's gone, Tom Hanrahan. An' now Poll Daly, that you wouldn't look at when Eily lived, is there with her house an' her fortune. You must send the matchmaker to her, Tom—for the childher's sake, man."

Tom Hanrahan listened to the speech with steadily growing horror. He fell back a little as it concluded, and reaching out caught Kitty's little hand.

"Whisht, woman dear. You don't know what you're talkin' about," he muttered, while the big beads of sweat came out on his forehead. "What, marry again! Put another woman over Eily's childher, is it? I'll do anything in rayson, but not that, oh, not that, good woman."

Then the women sitting round about broke out in voluble arguments, to all of which Tom Hanrahan listened with dumb shaking of the head. He had retired to the wall now, as if he had been beaten back. Little Kitty still held fast to his hand, and

kept glancing apprehensively from him to the circle of women. What they said passed over his head, most of it. The whole mind of the man was dumb-founded at the idea of his marrying another woman.

At the back of his mind he felt the thing was impossible, incredible. Still he was not the man to put his refusal into words. He wanted to be shut of the women, that was all. In this babel he could not think of Eily, and the thought of her was ever in his silence.

"Let me be and I will think of it," he said at last.

"Aye, think of it, Tom acushla. Think it over for the sake of them she's left wid you. Sure only for the childher nobody 'ud be dramin' of your marryin' again."

Thus the spokeswoman, Mary Casey, and having said as much she gathered all her kind-hearted meddlers together, and left the cabin.

"Let it lie in his mind," she said to them. "Let it lie till he sees that the whole of his pitaties are all as one as the poor things he held in his fist. 'Twas a shock to him sure enough; but he'll get used to it in time."

When Tom was left alone with Kitty he sat down on a stool by the cabin fire and reached for a turf to light his pipe. He had forgotten that he had had no tobacco for a couple of days past. Kitty watched

him with dumb sympathy as he sat sucking at the black pipe.

"Did ye ever hear the like o' that, Kitty?" he said, at last.

"Sure, they knew no better," answered the child. "Twas meant in kindness."

"Oh aye," said the man. "But it was a quare thing to ask me to do."

"It was," agreed the child; "but sure it's only the foolishness of them. They're kind, poor crathurs, an' done it for the best."

The man looked down at the unchildlike face.

"Is it true, avourneen, what they said, that I was puttin' too much on you?"

"It is not," said the child passionately. "'Tis all I'm vexed about wid them. Sure if there was a hundred Poll Dalys the childher couldn't do without me. An' the baby's rale fond o' me."

"So he is, so he is," assented the father, a watery gleam of humour breaking over his pale face. "Still you're only a wee bit of a thing to have the rarin' of a big fat baby like him."

"He claps his hands an' crows when he sees me. He's that knowledgeable already that he knows where the milk come from, an' laughs when he sees Cusha cross the bog. And Cusha knows him too. She'd give him the last drop of her milk."

"You should be at school, avourneen, as they said,

gettin' the book-larnin' instead of rarin' a little family."

"I don't think much of the book-learnin'," said Kitty gravely. "Sorra much good it does them that has it."

"Whisht, you foolish little girl. Sure it is the grandest thing at all to be a scholar."

"I'd rather sit in the sun an' nurse the baby any day," said Kitty. "An' what's more, I wouldn't go a foot to school, not if there was a thousand Poll Dalys in the place. Sure what does an ould maid like her know of rarin' a child? He'd be screechin' his little heart out for me, an' I in the ould school beyant learnin' ould pot-hooks an' hangers."

Tom gave a deep sigh of relief as he watched the expression of contempt in Kitty's face for the "book-larnin'."

"Very well, acushla," he answered humbly—"as long as I'm not wrongin' you. You know I'll do my best, Kitty asthore, for you an' the childher. I've great hopes that the pitaties won't turn out a bad crop after all."

"They'll turn out rale well," said Kitty. "An' now be puttin' them women out of your head, them an' their foolishness! Sure they must be talkin', God help them."

There was no reason for this hopefulness about the potatoes on the part of Tom and Kitty, except

perhaps that the day was a beautiful one, and every bog-pool like a window in heaven. On such days it is hard to remember that the winter, with misfortune in his track, is hard on the heels of the summer.

Tom went to work with a courage that lasted but a little while. The beautiful summer couldn't make big floury potatoes out of hard little unwholesome balls, nor put a hundred head of oats where one stood up in the poor land reclaimed from the bog. Cusha too was nearly dry, and she was old, poor thing, and not of much use to keep alive. Yet Tom couldn't bear to take her to a fair and sell her. Sure she had been a little calf when Eily and he were children together; and how proud they had been when they bought her after their marriage, and drove her home to her pasturage in the bog.

Tom worked hard that summer, and when his own scant hay and potatoes were saved, hired himself out to do another man's work. But no matter how hard he strove, want came steadily nearer his door. And over at Carnaduff Polly Daly's rick-yard was full, and she was pitting the finest of potatoes.

As the days turned round to autumn, Tom Hanrahan avoided the neighbouring women more and more. He hurried away from the chapel on Sunday morning instead of waiting for the neighbourly word and the bit of a chat. Sometimes when

he was working in the fields he would stop suddenly and wipe the cold sweat from his brow; and he'd rather meet the devil any day than Mary Casey. Often too he went alone to Eily's grave, and would kneel beside it till the night caught him with the tears running down his face. The heart of the man was torn in two between his love for his wife and his duty to his children.

To make things worse the autumn came the wettest was ever known. All day the valley was filled with a mist of rain, and floods were racing and leaping down every hill, and the bog was like a sponge filled to overflowing, and how the turf was to be cut no one knew.

"When Cusha comes home from the bog to-night," said Tom Hanrahan to Kitty one of those wet mornings, "I'll tether her in the shed. We'll have to sell her, Kitty, an' there's Glenna Fair on Saturday."

Kitty's eyes filled with large tears.

"She'd a' given the last drop of her milk to the baby," she said. The baby, who had been pulled nearer the hearth to get out of the way of the great hole in the thatch, opened his eyes and began to cry. He missed that gap through which he had been accustomed to see the sky and the occasional flight of a bird.

"I'll turn in and mend the roof to-morrow," said

Tom Hanrahan, "or we'll be washed clean out o' the place. I ought to ha' done it before, only I didn't like to give up the work at Kelly's."

That day he met Mary Casey at a bend of the road. He was obliged to stop, though his eyes all the time made for flight. They discussed the weather and the terrible state the poor people were going to be in for the winter, Tom all the time trying to give the conversation an impersonal turn. At last he made a movement to go, but he wasn't as free as he thought, poor man! Mary Casey held his hand a minute as he said good-bye.

"Be a man, Tom," she said, "or you'll see Eily's childher starvin' this winter. Poll Daly 'll make a kind mother over them."

Tom wrenched his hand from her, and went home miserably. When he got in, the dusk was lying low over all the bog, and the children were crouching by the glimmer on the hearth.

"Cusha never came home, daddy," piped up the smallest boy, "an' Kitty says we'll be drowned in a bog-hole if we go to look for her."

Tom sat down with a heavy prevision of new misfortune. So many years at sundown Cusha had come home picking her way cleverly over the soft places in the bog. But now she was getting old and stupid, the creature, and in many places the bog-pools must have widened to little inland seas. Tom

never doubted that Cusha was drowned, and his fears turned out to be too true.

When it was certain that the last thing that stood between them and starvation was gone, Tom Hanrahan felt that indeed the Fates were on the side of the wise women of Glenna Valley, and his heart was filled with a helpless bitterness worse than death.

He had no heart to mend the thatch as he had promised. The day after they had found poor Cusha, dead and stiff, he and Kitty sat together comfortless. The children were playing in Cusha's shed—so they were undisturbed. Only the baby lay on Kitty's lap, stretching his feet towards the damp turf fire into which the rain hissed. Rain! It was the worst of rain. Grey sheets and seas of it over the bog, and the hills blotted out, as you blot out the lines on a slate by passing a bit of a sponge over it.

Tom Hanrahan looked at the kicking baby.

"The flesh 'll go off him now, Kitty, that his best friend is gone."

Kitty caught the baby to her with a spasm of maternal fear.

"God wouldn't allow it," she said. "I'd beg the world for him sooner."

Tom Hanrahan took out his old red handkerchief and wiped his face.

"Everything's drivin' me to it, Kitty," he said.

And then in a hoarse voice, "Oh, my God, how am I to face Eily after puttin' Poll Daly in her place?"

Kitty crept a bit nearer to him.

"Whisht," she whispered, "whisht! Sure they'd have the sense to know there that you wor druv to it, that it was for the childher you done it."

"There'll be lashins an' lavins in the place when Poll Daly's in it," the man said drearily. "Yez'll never want for anythin' any more. But I wish to God I could go away an' lave yez to the comfort. I'm nigh hand tired o' livin', Kitty avourneen, since your mother died."

The child lifted her ragged pinafore and wiped away a tear. She sat rocking the baby to and fro on her knees in silence for a minute.

"'Twould ha' been aisier," she said at last, "if she'd took us wid her."

"It would so," said the man. "But I'm misdoubtin' 'tis little she'll care in heaven for Poll Daly's husband."

"She'd *know* it was the childher," said the child again.

"Maybe she'd put it on me to do," said the man. "An' yet if she'd asked me the like when she was dyin' I'd have said it was too hard."

"The wind is risin'," said little Kitty, "or it's the roar o' them sthrames. I do be thinkin' o' Cushu

the poor crathur, missin' her footin' an' not bein' able to find her way out again."

"I suppose she was on me mind last night," said Tom Hanrahan. "I had the quarest ould dhrame ever was. Stannin' on high ground I was, an' the roar of a river in me ears. An' then it came tumblin' on, oceans of it, muddy an' straked wid foam. An' threes an' stacks an' little calves an' sheep it was carryin' wid it. An' begor as I was watchin' it the corpse of a man came along. Then I laned out, thinkin' it might be some man I knew. An' begorra, Kitty, *I saw meself*. It gev me a rale start in the dhrame, an' I sat up sweatin'. But there was nothin', only the roar o' the sthrames an' the rain peltin' agin the house."

The child drew in her breath sharply.

"'Twas an ugly ould dhrame," she said, "an' the Lord betune us an' harm!"

"'Tis hardly worth while mendin' the ould hole in the thatch," Tom Hanrahan went on. "Poll'll be for havin' the whole of us over to her place. The sorra on the woman!" he went on. "What can she want with a widdyman an' a handful o' young childher?"

"'Tis meself won't like lavin' the ould cabin," said Kitty.

"There's harder things to lave," said Tom Hanrahan drearily. "I brought your mother home here,

Kitty, when I married her. But sure 'tis no use talkin'. Dead is dead, an' to-morra I send the matchmaker to Poll Daly."

That night when Tom Hanrahan gathered his little flock around him to recite the Rosary for the repose of their mother's soul, he felt as if it were for the last time. To-morrow night he would be Poll Daly's promised husband, and he would have turned his back on Eily for ever.

As he lay in bed and heard the soft breathing of the children around him, the big sobs shook him. He was crying to his dead wife over the grave and silence.

"If you could only come to me, acushla, an' say you forgive me, an' know I'm not doin' it to plase myself, but for your little childher that they mayn't want! Oh, my God, if I could only see you stannin' there in the strake o' moonlight an' know you came to comfort me, your poor misfortunate husband that you left behind!"

But the moon scurried behind a wild cloud, and the shadows fled across his floor, and no answer came. At last he slept exhausted, lulled by the dull roar of the waters, and all the little flock was asleep.

It must have been soon after midnight that the cabin began to rock like a cradle when a foot is stirring it. Up and down, up and down, it soon

went like a tree in a gale, but the children were all sleeping. Outside the solid earth was quaking, the bog was beginning to move, and every swirling stream from the mountains was helping to cut it loose from its foundations. But the wind had gone down, and the moon, coming out of a torn world of clouds, bathed all the wreck and ruin in silver.

When the bog at last stood still, and began to give up its dead, it was found that the dead and the living had voyaged in company.

Erris churchyard stood in the path of the bog, and was covered as completely as the homesteads of the living. Many a coffin washed out of its grave came down with the bog. And they do say that Eily Hanrahan's coffin was found not far from the spot where Tom and little Kitty, with the baby clasped close to her, and the children were drawn out of the black mass. Anyhow they were laid together in one grave. Peace be with them.

GIPSIES BOTH

HE had the wild, shy eyes of a woodland creature, albeit civilization claimed him as her own, and had even endowed him with responsibilities. His loose clothes he wore as if he would have shuffled them off with pleasure, and with them a good many other restraints. His foot tapped the mountain road as though it answered to the piper who plays the magical tune of "Over the hills and far away." He looked down at a little stream that stole through the grasses of the field, and slipped under the road, and out again the other side, and meandered its string of green and silver ribbon across a stubble-field and into the autumnal distances.

"Ah!" said he, with a long sigh. "When I was a boy I never could resist a stream like that. I always had to fling by everything, and follow it till I found it filling some little cup in the heart of the mountain. You never know where it will lead you to, once you begin the chase. Those little streams wind in and out incredibly. Why, you might be days tracking it, and then it would bring you out——"

At the end of the rainbow," said I.

"Ah!" said he. "That is where a crock of gold lies buried."

"The chase would be the crock of gold to you," said I.

He made me no answer, for a big, hulking figure suddenly hove in sight by his shoulder. So thickly was the road carpeted with russet leaves that we had not heard the footsteps following ours.

"God save you kindly!" said the new-comer, with the familiar Irish greeting.

He was a bullet-headed fellow with a shock of grizzled curls, and a face burnt black almost by the sun's kisses. It was an impudent, artful, innocent, cozening face, the face of a hardened pagan, for all the godliness upon the lips. An old friend of ours, the travelling tinker, who is the plague of honest farmers, with his marauding herds of donkeys and goats—a gipsy, like every travelling tinker of them in Ireland, where gipsy and tinker are synonymous terms.

My companion's face brightened.

"Where are you off to?" he cried.

"Over the mountains to Bray, your honour."

"All by yourself?"

"The girsha and the wee dog is in Bray. The bits of asses and the two goats are in the pound. I came to see the polis about gettin' them out."

"Trespassing again?"

"Just pickin' a bit o' Mr. Gallagher's after-grass. 'Tis surprising the cuteness av the crathurs. They smells the after-grass, an' man nor mortal wouldn't keep them by the roadside after."

"Especially if some one opens a gate to let them in."

"You wouldn't be expectin' them to open the gate for theirselves, the crathurs."

My companion laughed softly to himself.

"'Tis the pleasant life you have, out in all weathers, and under the moon and the stars."

"Pleasant enough, your honour, betwixt May Day and Michaelmas. After that it does be pinchin' often. Still, there's always a cowshed or a haystack to creep into, an' sometimes, glory be to God! there's a hate of a warm fireside as well."

"And you sit about the turf fire and tell stories and sing songs, and go over again the memories of old times—the good times before the Famine—and you hear many a tale of '98, maybe?"

"We do that same," said the tinker, with sly eyes narrowed between close lids. "Your honour likes th' ould stories?"

"I like them well."

"An' hearin' of the troubles. Dear, dear, them were terrible times."

"Have you stories of the troubles?"

"Why wouldn't I? Me own grandfather was killed at Oulart Hollow."

My companion's eyes jumped at him.

"It would be a fine life travelling as you do when the troubles were brewing—a fine opportunity for a man carrying messages from one county to another."

"It would so; but sure them ould times is past, glory be to God."

"Are you a Catholic?"

"A sort of a wan, your honour. Not as good as I might be. Still I have a great respect for the Protestants. Sure me grandfather, when he was on the run after New Ross, was taken in by a Protestant gentleman near the Hill of Tara, an' hid in the hayloft till the troubles blew over. Why wouldn't I have a respect for them?"

He looked at us with a sly eye that told us he suspected one of us to be of the dominant religion, and we did not undeceive him.

"You have the Irish?"

The tinker laughed.

"'Tis my welcome to many a fireside. Before the *vanithee* (*i.e.* the woman of the house) can bid me be off, for she has no pots to mend, I tip her the Irish."

He rattled off a long string of greetings and blessings, in the native Gaelic, which my companion received with smiles and nods.

"You can sing?"

"I've the name of a singer," modestly; "an' many's the ould-fashioned song my mother taught me: 'Colleen dhas cruid the-na-mo,' an' 'John O'Dwyer A-Glanna,' an' 'The Foggy Dew.'"

One could believe, looking at the fellow's chest and throat, that he sang like a blackbird.

"I wish we'd time to hear you."

"Another time, your honour. I'm often in this part of the country—as the farmers an' the polis know." This with a grin. "Now I'll be makin' my way to the girsha. I see the moon climbin' the hill, and I'd better be travelling wid her."

"When will you get to Bray?"

"About nine in the mornin' with good luck. I'd maybe sleep a bit on the way. Thank ye kindly, your honour"—my companion had slipped a shilling in his palm. "You wouldn't be after changin' your mind about the bit of a pup?" Yesterday he had offered us a tiny mongrel puppy for half-a-crown. "'Tis a well-bred wan, your honour—the rale ould fightin' Irish tarrier strain. It's been in the family longer than I can recollect."

"We'll talk about it when you come back."

"More power to your honour. I'll be back this way next week, after the asses, your honour. Sure I can't do without them at all."

He pulled one of his rough curls by way of

salute, and was off at an immense shambling trot which covered the road with inconceivable speed. In a few seconds he was dwindling beyond us in the long perspective of bronze-coloured hedges which enclosed a wall of blue mountain.

As we watched him my companion sighed, and the pace which he accommodated to mine seemed to sound heavily.

"He will find a cave in the hills to-night," he said, half to himself, "and will fill it with dead leaves for a bed. And he will see the moon and the stars looking in at him."

Now the tinker was almost out of sight. A moment more he would have passed the bend of the road and disappeared from view.

"Do you think there was anything in his story about having the dogs in his family for so long? Why, if it is true, that puppy's ancestor may have nosed about among the dead at Oulart Hollow and Vinegar Hill."

"I don't suppose there was anything in it," I replied soberly. "It's the heart's blood of a mongrel, anyhow."

"Still, 'tis a great life for a dog," said my companion again, with the sound of longing in his voice.

"Or a man," said I.

"Or a man," said he.

"Look you," asked he again, "did you notice the great walk of him from the hips? And did you see his big brogues, how they were slit down to give the foot freedom?"

"I didn't notice," said I.

"Ah, didn't you?" said he, and looked down at his own slightly-shod feet with dissatisfaction. "Well, I did. 'Twould be grand to be out walking with him to-night in the mountains, listening to his stories and his songs."

‘ A PACK O’ CHILDSHER ’

“ It’s jokin’ you are, doctor dear,” said old Michael Carty. “ I feel as young as ever I was, an’ yet you’re advisin’ me to lie up in the corner, an’ lave my place in the hands of a pack o’ childsher.”

The doctor smiled suavely.

“ You’re a wonderful man for your age, Mr. Carty, but it is a great age all the same. Let me see, you were born in——”

“ I was twenty-five years old the year of the big wind. I was a sturdy gorsoon the time o’ the battle of Waterloo, an’ the people were still talkin’ in whispers about the Rebellion. What do you make that, doctor ? ”

“ H’m. Let me see. You’ll be about eighty-eight years of age, Mr. Carty.”

“ I’m every day o’ that, doctor. But we’re a long-lived stock. My grandmother lived to be above a hundred, an’ my Uncle Pat was buried at ninety-seven. ’Twas standin’ out in the rain to see his praties picked carried him off. I doubt that I’ll go much sooner myself. I’ve neither pain nor ache, thank God—though perhaps you wouldn’t be sorry

if I had," he added with a sly chuckle. "Yet I'm always pleased to see you, doctor—as a friend, you understand. An' you'll always find a good glass o' grog waitin' for you."

The doctor's eyes twinkled under his bushy brows.

"Thank you kindly, Mr. Carty, I'm always glad to drop in in the way of friendship, as you say. Still, I wish you'd think about what I've said. You can surely trust staid men like Pat and Larry with your business, and spare yourself a little more."

"I'd trust no one with the land, doctor. I've worked hard for it, an' earned it. I love every inch of it—aye, every little blackthorn that's throwing out its blossom in the hedge, every grass-blade lyin' low before the wind. It's all mine an' hard won, an' I'm fonder of it thin flesh an' blood. Listen, doctor dear; when I die I don't want to be goin' to Kilbride at all. I want to lie about the middle of the ten acres, with the daisies an' grass over me, and the bastes munchin' above my head. The pleasant sound o' them feedin' 'ud be in my ears like my mother's 'hush-o.'"

"We won't talk about burying you yet, Mr. Carty. I dare say you've a good many years of hale life before you. Still, you've been long enough in harness, and it's time for the young ones to take their turn, and for you to enjoy your well-earned rest."

"Have they been puttin' you up to it, doctor?"

asked the old fellow, with suspicion in his voice. "For if they have, you can tell them they'll rule when I'm in my coffin, but no sooner."

"Tut-tut, Mr. Carty! no one's been putting me up to anything. You mustn't grow suspicious of your friends, you know, or they'll give up coming to see you."

"No offence, doctor! But if I was to do that same you're after talkin' about, maybe they'd be dividin' the land on me before I was gone. I've tied it up pretty tight, I can tell you, an' the will's with Stewart in the town. I couldn't rest aisy if I thought they'd divide it."

"You have good children, Mr. Carty," said the doctor, gravely.

"I've made them good, doctor; they were contrary and headstrong enough to start with. There's Judy. Are you listenin' to me, Judy?"

A woman who was darning stockings by the window lifted her head.

"I'm listenin', father."

"Judy 'd have med a fine fool of herself wid Armstrong o' the Glen if I hadn't ruled her. 'Stay by the land, girl,' I said, 'an' the land 'll stay by you.' I never thought much o' the Armstrongs, seed, breed and generation. Yet Judy there fought like a wild cat to have her will an' bring a beggar in to me on the floor."

"Let it be, father," said the woman. "Willie Armstrong is dead these thirty years."

"Thirty years! You're jokin', girl. 'Twas but the other day, or at most a year or two ago."

The woman answered nothing, but looked out of the window at her father's fields stretching away to the big purple mountain which seemed for ever to cast a shadow on the farm-house. As far away on the other side was the sea. They were hemmed in by mountain and sea, and the loneliness of the stretching fields where the peewit cried and the sheep bleated had encompassed them all their lives. Outside those boundaries they had scarcely dared to go, except to Mass on Sundays, in all the years of their lives. Flesh and blood had indeed counted little in Michael Carty's thoughts as against the fields.

"'Tis surprisin', doctor dear," went on the old man, "how the young 'll set their will against them that knows better an' is all for their good. You'd be surprised to know how Judy there fought me to be Mrs. Armstrong. Her sister Lily was easier said by me when she wanted to go an' be a nun. I soon put a stop to that foolishness. I said to her, an' she standin' there, shakin' an' cryin'——"

"Don't be talkin' about Lily, father. You forget that she died long ago."

The old man looked at her with a bewilderment

which was the first sign of age, and lifted a hand to rub his eyes.

"Ay, sure enough, I'd forgotten. My memory's gettin' slippery. I do often be drammin' or thinkin' that Lily's in the room wid me, an' we're always arguin' the same question. 'Let me go,' she says, 'or you'll break my heart.' 'Hearts aren't so easy broke, girl,' I says. An' then I see her shakin' and sobbin'; I forget she's dead so long. She was the pretty one, an' my favourite always, though I never showed it to her. It wasn't my way, doctor."

The doctor looked pityingly at the woman's face by the window. The outlines had sharpened, and the cheeks and lips fallen in, but once she must have been a pretty woman. The faded skin was yet soft and fair, and the knot of grey curls at the back of her head had streaks of withered gold, from which one could guess the ringlets about the young face.

"I thought 'twas idleness was on Lily. She was always quiet enough; never one for divarsion like Judy there. Once give them a taste o' divarsion, doctor, an' they'll go to the devil for more. I never let mine taste it, but Judy took a strong hand over her. 'If you want change, girl,' I says to Lily, 'out wid you to the barn, an' cut the potatoes for seed. 'Twill suit you better than piano-playin'."

"You'd no business to send her out, father," said the woman, with a tremble of passion in her voice.

"She wasn't fit for the cold clay floor, an' the wind an' the rain beatin' in. She was never strong like me."

"Tut-tut," said the old fellow querulously. "Don't be settin' yourself up against me after all these years. There's a spirit in you yet that wants to be broken. 'Good childher,' you said, doctor! Good enough as long as I've my eye on them. But I'll go bail Pat 'll be bringin' in Susy Cullen on the floor before I'm cold. 'If you want to marry,' says I to him, 'marry land. 'Tis only a fool like you 'ud think of a hussy widout a penny to her fortune.' Would you believe it, doctor, that the tears stood in his eyes—aye, great big drops? He's not half the man that Judy there is. Judy 'd have eloped wid Armstrong's son, but that I found her out in time."

"Whisht, father," said the woman again. "Let the dead rest."

Two men waited for the doctor in the kitchen down-stairs. Their faces might have been carved out of grey granite, and their beetling brows and iron-grey hair gave them a hard look that the eyes contradicted. The eyes were brown and gentle, like the eyes of beasts, and full of a melancholy patience.

"He won't give up," said the doctor; "he'll hold the reins till he drops."

"'Tis the wonderful great ould man he is entirely,"

said the older man. “I’d never meddle him only that I know things is at sixes and sevens. He’s payin’ away money that was never due, an’ he’s losin’ things, an’ he’s burnin’ an’ destroyin’ night after night up there in his room, an’ no one knows what. Maybe ’tis bank-notes, for all we know, for the mind of him is not what it was.”

“I’m misdoubtin’,” said the younger despondently, “that if we had everything in our hands this minit we’d know what to do with it. He’s held his tongue all his life, an’ what he has an’ what he hasn’t no man knows. We’re not fit to stand in his shoes at all, Pat. Sure he’s brought us up to be nothin’ at all but a pack o’ childher.”

A RIDICULOUS AFFAIR

EVERYONE said that the Widow Lynch and her daughter Nora were more like sisters than like mother and daughter. Indeed, some daring spirits went further yet, and suggested that Nora might have been taken for the elder sister. But seeing that there were twenty good years between them, that was a saying which did not find many to agree with it.

The little woman had been the fondest of mothers to her one child. When Johnny Lynch left her a widow at two-and-twenty, all the neighbours thought she would not long remain lonely. She was as plump as a robin, and as pretty; and Johnny had left Carrigdrohane Farm in the best of heart and condition; and sure nobody could object to the girsha, or think of her in the light of that cold word, "an encumbrance."

But Mrs. Lynch had remained obstinate to all the wooers, shaking her pretty, bright head, and looking so sorry because she could not say yes to

them, that unless they were curmudgeons entirely, they went away more in love with her than ever.

Nora had been enough for her happiness all those years. She had not been romantically in love with Johnny; in fact, it had been one of the made marriages, which women accept so placidly in Ireland, habit taking the place of heroism or duty, or any more high-sounding name. She had grieved for a good, staid husband; but her first experience of the love which has something unearthly in its strength and its sweetness came to her with her maternity.

Now Nora was grown-up, a tall young woman with blue-black braids of hair, and fine straight brows, and a firm mouth. And little by little she had assumed the reins of government at Carrigdrohane, taking over the management of the farm from the somewhat slack hands of the old man who had "stewarded" for her mother, and had found Mrs. Lynch an unexacting mistress.

It was not so with Miss Nora. Paddy Carthy soon discovered that under the new management he must run straight or go. He chose to run straight, to the great increase of the returns from the farm. Nora would have rather preferred him to go, but did not quite see her way to harshly dismissing an old servant. And Paddy, like many

of his class, instead of resenting the new government, grew attached to the girl, and was a bit afraid of her; and under the new conditions promised to be rather a valuable ally.

Nora's education had not been neglected. Her mother had put her to school "at the Nuns'," from whom she had learned nothing very exact—it was the most easy-going system of teaching, since the Intermediate Education Act had not yet come to make dull and vulgarize the youth of Ireland—but a good many charming things. She learned to do fine needlework, and to make excellent French coffee and rolls; she picked up certain little refinements of behaviour, which one would hardly expect of a girl in her position, and what was more, she imparted them to her mother. She improved the manner of her speech; that is to say, she kept her pretty brogue, while correcting her pronunciation. Her voice received a certain training. It was a rich contralto voice, quite unlike that of her mother, who sang like a linnet.

There was no doubt about it. Association with ladies had given Nora her last touch of ladyhood; not fine ladyhood, that is to say, but something quite congruous with her position. She had the natural gifts, and the conventional touch was added. It is very easy to make a comparatively humbly-born Irish girl into a lady, perhaps because they have the good

blood so often. Anyhow, Nora was a triumph for the convent.

Carrigdrohane Farm touched at its westward point on the lands of Temple, that belonged to the great old family of the Roches. Great, that is to say, in ages gone, for they had been poor a hundred years or more. Still, the Irish peasant is slow to forget the claims of ancient high descent. Mr. Edmund Roche, the present representative of the family, was always Lord Roche to the people about, though he laid no claim to the title. That he had allowed the lands of Temple to become a waste of docks and thistles, while he looked at the stars through a telescope, only made him more respected by his neighbours. "Sure, it wasn't expectin' a Roche, you'd be, to be lookin' after the dirty coppers?" was what they said.

Young Frank, however, was something of a shock to the people as he grew up. He displayed no love of learning. He ran away from the schools he was sent to ; and at last his father bade him go his own way. Lord Roche at the moment had his eye glued to the end of the telescope, and saw nothing of the ingenuous joy in his heir's countenance. Indeed, he forgot him with all speed, and only remembered him in a gentle, absent-minded manner when they met at meals.

Young Frank grew up an out-door boy, and a

farmer born, to the consternation of the neighbours. He was the first Roche who had ever wanted to soil his hands with labour. The neighbours put it down to his mother's account. She had been a solicitor's daughter from Cork, and according to rumour had married Edmund Roche before he knew where he was at all, at all. Anyhow, here was the low money-grubbing instinct coming out in the last of the Roches; and what was worse, young Frank would take no man's advice, but set about the redemption of Temple in an independent way of his own, boy as he was, only listening with polite impatience to the counsel of any man who had ever turned a sod or reared a pig.

Hitherto the Roches had been of necessity solitary. The priest, the parson, and the doctor were the only visitors to Temple. The ordinary farming and shop-keeping people about were not on the level of the old ruined family. The gentry, mostly alien in blood and sympathies, were ignorant or contemptuous of the pretensions of the master of Temple, whose tower with its telescope was an object in the landscape.

Now quite suddenly a friendship sprang up between the Roches and the Lynches.

It began between the young people. An accidental meeting where their lands touched, led up to a visit of young Frank to Carrigdrohane Farm, where he

enjoyed a high tea, with the appetite of a labouring man. The Widow Lynch was a born housekeeping woman, and her teas were something notable in that land of bad cookery and slack housekeeping. The cold fowl and home-cured bacon, the boiled eggs, the hot cakes, the whole-meal bread, the cream and honey, and marmalade, vanished before young Frank as before an army.

The Widow Lynch beamed on his progress. "Sure I don't like to think of it," she said to Nora afterwards, "what way those menkind are living at all, at all, over there at Temple, with only old Katty Murphy to look after them."

After tea young Frank sat and listened to the mother and daughter, while they sang. The piano was old, and the notes tinkled, but the tone was still sweet. The widow played the accompaniments with soft touches. They sang old-fashioned sentimentalities, "The Gipsy Countess," and such things, together. Then the widow sang "She Wore a Wreath of Roses"; and Nora followed up with the ringing chords of "Oh, Where's the Slave so Lowly?"

Young Roche sat nursing his knees and gazing at the dark head and the chestnut-brown head by the piano as one fascinated, and seemed hardly able to tear himself away.

Not very long afterwards he came again, and his father with him. How he had managed to coax the

recluse from his telescope no one ever knew; but there was Lord Roche in Mrs. Lynch's best parlour, a tall, lean man, with the bleached look of a student, and an oddly distinguished air about him, for all his shabby clothes.

His grey eyes lost something of their mist of dreams. He who had been so silent that he might well have forgotten how to talk, became quite animated and conversational. He had beautiful manners, there was no doubt of it; and they impressed the mother and daughter in different ways. The mother was slightly flurried by them. The daughter, on the other hand, received the old-fashioned courtesies and compliments as her due. The men of her world had not known how to treat her—that was all. Not for the first time did Widow Lynch, recognizing her daughter's perfect *aplomb*, look at her with awe and delight, wondering how she had come to give birth to such a prodigy.

After that the father and son were constant visitors at Carrigdrohane. Presently Mrs. Lynch and her daughter paid a visit to Temple, and were shown the telescope.

The widow made naïve remarks about it, and about the wonders of star-gazing. To tell the truth, she was so acutely distressed by the flaws she found in Mrs. Murphy's housekeeping, and the state to which the old glass and silver and napery yet apper-

taining to the Roches had been reduced, that she couldn't think of a celestial globe.

Nora, on the other hand, brought an amazing intelligence and interest to bear on Lord Roche's studies. His lean face lit up, his eyes sparkled, as he talked to her. Presently young Frank and the widow were quite outside the conversation. The others appeared to have forgotten their presence, so absorbed was the one in talking, the other in listening.

The neighbourhood was much scandalized when it became known that the Widow Lynch and Nora were as thick as thieves with the Roches, father and son.

It explained many things to the neighbours. It explained Nora's uppishness to the young men about, and her mother's refusal to have a match made for her daughter, although her own match had been made with Johnny Lynch, and he a "boy" of sixty-two, and everything had turned out well for her.

Such uplifted eyes and hands there were over the impudence and the cunning of mother and daughter! They to aspire to the Roches! Many things, real and imaginary, that might be supposed to be discreditable in the past histories of the Lynches and the Grogans—Mrs. Lynch had been a Grogan—were raked up at the tea-tables of the neighbourhood.

Of course Nora was setting her cap at young Frank, and her mother was aiding and abetting her. Presently some lively person suggested that the widow wanted Lord Roche for herself; but this, though it provoked an outbreak of sardonic laughter, did not gain much acceptance. The presumption of the little widow aspiring to a great scholar like the "lord," to say nothing of his gentle blood, was too incredible. Besides, her resolution not to marry had become an accepted fact. Sure every eligible widower and bachelor in the country had asked her long ago. The "boy" of sixty-two had apparently satisfied her matrimonial aspirations.

Only old Grandmother Grady, who was ninety-four, listening to one such discussion among her grandchildren, wheezed out that the wisest men were the greatest fools over a pretty face, and that the Widow Lynch was prettier at thirty-eight than she had been as a terrified little bride of seventeen.

But nobody heard the grandmother wheezing and chuckling. Her speech passed for no more than a succession of coughs.

Meanwhile the general disapproval did not reach Nora or the widow, nor would it have perturbed the daughter at least if it had. She was finding her life very full now, and more variously and richly coloured than she had thought it possible for life to be. To the quiet sense of well-being which her

perfect health and her life in the fields had given her, there was now added something else, something disturbing and delightful, which gave Nora's beauty just the touch it needed ; for it set up soft smouldering fires in her blue eyes, and painted her cheek with a radiant colour that came and went. She held herself straight as a flame, and her light feet hardly seemed to touch the earth as she went. It might have been the spring stirring in her young blood as it did in the sap of the trees. When she was alone, she smiled at her thoughts, or broke into song, or she whispered poetry to herself under her breath.

For a while everything went happily. Then what shadow was it grew up between mother and daughter, who a little while ago had only lived for each other ?

It was something so impalpable that the Roches, father and son, who spent so many quietly happy evenings at Carrigdrohane, never so much as suspected that shadowy trouble.

It was not want of love that was at the root of it. The mother, who had always been ready to put her hands under the feet of her one child (as the neighbours said, half in condemnation), had now a more timorous and adoring sweetness of manner. Nora's mysterious brightness was suddenly clouded over by something which was almost stern. Yet the sternness was not for the little Redbreast mother, whom she loaded with the tender and careful attentions

which had been the daughter's way to the mother since she had any sense at all.

It was summer now, and the new friendship brought them many little open-air expeditions and pleasures which hitherto they had not known. At first Nora had listened to the "lord" with intelligent interest, drawing him on to talk while the others discoursed of simpler things and wondered over the condition of their special belongings.

It had been the widow and Frank who set out the food and picked up sticks and boiled the kettle at their picnics. "Sure what was she good for but to be useful?" said the widow, all smiles and dimples; "and Mr. Frank was as handy with himself as ever she wished to see."

But suddenly things changed. The party, when it divided at all, divided as it ought to—that is to say, the elder people went together: the young couple went together. No one could say who brought it about. Certainly it wasn't the "lord," who became as silent as of old, and manifested signs of returning to his telescope, and would bring back the widow from their expeditions together, looking the most melancholy of Redbreasts.

At last, one evening, after a particularly calamitous day, mother and daughter being left alone at an unusually early hour, Mrs. Lynch suddenly burst into tears.

Nora was beside her in an instant, holding the ruffled bronze head to her breast, and making little sounds of pity over it, such as a mother makes to her child.

"I'd be better gone out of it altogether," Mrs. Lynch sobbed, "than to be annoying you, child. Indeed it isn't my fault at all, at all. D'ye think I'd be coming between you and him? Sure 'tis only the foolishness of him. Young men do often be taking fancies like that for women old enough to be their mothers. 'Tis well the women wouldn't be listening to them. Still, if you're fond of him—and sure, why wouldn't you be?—I couldn't forgive myself for being in it at all to put such nonsense into his head."

The strangest mingling of expressions had been flitting across her daughter's face while she listened to this speech.

"Is it Frank you're talking about?" she asked, when the sobs died off into incoherence. "Is it Frank that has the fancy for you, motherreen? Sure then I think he's very sensible, and I'm sure he knows his own mind. I wouldn't say no to him too quickly if I were you."

The mother looked up in amazement, the tears still hanging on her long brown lashes.

"Sure, what are you talking about, child?" she asked. "Is it and him twenty-three and me thirty-

eight? And sure you're fond of him yourself, dear, aren't you? You couldn't help being."

"Not I," answered Nora, with the most heart-whole laugh. "I'm fond of him indeed, but not in that way at all. Wasn't I a silly gaby not to see what was going on? I thought you'd a fancy for the 'lord.' Weren't you always praising him to me? And lately didn't you always try to be with him?"

"Sure I did. And goodness knows the penance it was to me! Me fond of him? Why, I'd run down a mouse-hole from him, I'm that afraid of him, for all he's so pleasant and polite. He didn't seem to want my company either. He was as silent as the grave. And that foolish boy going mad all the time! He wouldn't listen to me when I said I was an old woman, a widow these sixteen years. Ah, sure I couldn't tell you half the foolishness of him."

"I'm glad you didn't want his father," said Nora thoughtfully, "for there wouldn't have been any happiness at all in that. That's what troubled me. I couldn't see my way to helping you at all. Say yes to Frank, motherreen."

She looked at her with thoughtful eyes. She was beginning to understand how her mother was so young and pretty. This was her first time of love. The "boy" of sixty-two had never wakened his bride's childish heart.

"Indeed he wouldn't take no for an answer. . .

That's what's been troubling me," answered the widow simply. "He's terrible determined, that's what the boy is."

"It'll be the happiest marriage in the county, except perhaps one," said Nora, with a bright blush. "He'd better come over here and look after the farm for you."

"And what about you, child?"

"About me? Oh, I shall——"

"No?" said the mother incredulously.

"Yes," said Nora, nodding her head.

"We'll be the laughing-stock of the county. At least I shall be. The 'lord's' forty-four if he's a day, and you're but twenty. Things do seem queerly matched."

"You never could help him with the telescope, so it's as well. As for the laughter, we shan't know anything about it. You'll be too happy, and I shall be too happy. I can carry on Frank's work at Temple."

"The poor 'lord'!" said Mrs. Lynch. "To think how I was bothering the man! He did look queer and lost and put about when I took him away from you. You're sure you're fond of him, Nora?"

"*Sure!*" echoed Nora. "Sure that's what was the matter with me, that I thought you couldn't help being in love with him. I think there never was the like of him in the world. It's myself will be proud looking after the place for him."

The scandal in the countryside when it was known how the couples were to pair off was enormous ; but, as Nora said, they were too happy to hear of it. And it was a happiness that continued. Indeed, if there was any difference between the devotion of the Roches, father and son, to their respective wives, one would have said that Frank was the more devoted of the two. But the countryside has not yet got over talking of it as "a ridiculous affair."

THE CRY OF THE CHILD

HIGH above Brigid Neilly's house, Slievedhu ("the dark hill") rose threateningly. His shadow was over all the bog-land, except where the thatch of her house and the yellow of her crops made a patch of gold right under him. He was a big cloud most days for a wide stretch of the bog-land. Else there were no shadows there, except the shadows of boulders when the sun lay to the east or west of them, or the shadows of clouds in the bog-pools, slow-moving, majestic, like a white fleet of ships, or hurry-skurrying in a rough game with the sun. Or it might be the shadow of trouble or suffering in human eyes.

There were houses on the bog-land, but they hardly rose high enough to make a shadow; mere tatters of mud and scraws, they were like deserted nests that the bird has no use for. You went into them bent double, and when you were in could see nothing for the sharp smoke that filled your lungs and made your eyes water. But so humble were they, and so much of the colour of the bog, that you

had to be quite near them before you saw they were houses at all.

The dwellers in these cabins farmed patches of land, the fields of which were about the size of a tablecloth, let alone that the rocks stood up here and there in them to turn the point of the finest spade ever made. Poverty there was in the bog-land; famine and fever came so often that quite middle-aged men and women could remember half-a-score visitations. But poverty, in the worst sense of it, was not known by Brigid Neilly's hearth.

Brian, her father, had toiled early and late to make his daughter the heiress she was. He was not only a hard worker, but thrifty and keen at a bargain, so he had been able to leave his girl the house and place, the crops and stock, and the golden guineas in the bank; and since Brian went—God rest him!—nothing had dwindled, to be sure, in Brigid's hands.

She was Brian's daughter in practical qualities. But her mother, who had been taken from school to marry the strong farmer when he was already grey as a badger and hard as a flint, had had her part, too, in the shaping of her child.

So Brigid, though she trafficked wiser than many men in the selling and buying of cattle, and was knowledgable in seeds and crops, and had new-fangled ideas upon putting manure in the land, was

yet softer than you could have expected of Brian's daughter. The people nodded their heads and said so when Brigid brought home Maureen Daly's child from the other side of the hill, and, herself little more than a slip of a girl, set up to be rearing another woman's child.

The child of the dead woman was a poor, miserable bit of a thing at the time, five years old, and pale, with big eyes that looked as if the life had been frightened out of the soul behind them. And well it might be, for that was a famine year, and Maureen Daly had died of the fever before her cousin Brigid had heard of it and come with help to the door.

The women—and it was surprising what a number of them could come flocking together out of the ragged cabins and the miserable bit of village at the Point—the women were all ready to advise Brigid how the child should be reared.

They were not cheerful advisers however.

"You'll never rear her, Brigid Neilly," said old Moll Sharkey, who had buried so many children that she was reputed wise in the rearing of them, and many a one would rather consult her than the lonely young doctor who had the dispensary over at Breagy.

"Take my word for it," she said, "you'll never rear her. She has the hollows behind the ears that never come but for death."

Then the other women all pressed nearer to look at the child, who, with a cry as if she understood, ran to Brigid and clung sobbing with her face buried in her friend's lap.

Then Brigid bade them all begone with an anger that is remembered against her to this day by many. And after that she would take no advice upon the rearing of the child from them that were mothers. And, as everyone said, it was the worst foolishness for her, a slip of a girl, to try to do the like without advice.

However, things didn't turn out as the women prophesied at all, and Brigid reared the child. It was a thing would have surprised old Brian to see the good milk and eggs she put into the starved little body. She was like a mother to the child; and as time went by you couldn't have known her for Maureen Daly's baby, that had been dwiny from the birth.

Brigid and little Maureen, as time went by, made an odd pair. Maureen was like a soft white kitten, with her white face, and pale gold hair, and great eyes. Brigid, on the other hand, though handsome, was something of the looks of Slievedhu himself. That is to say, she was dark, and often moody-looking, though there was a grandeur about her head and her walk that made pretty girls common beside her.

They that knew her best said Brigid had never any mean little ways in her. She could forgive anything but a lie or deceitfulness. If she was a trifle hard at times she was just, and once she was your friend it took a deal to shake her. She knew there was plenty of evil dealing and doing, even in the little lonely world about her; but she was not suspicious, for all that, and if she liked you it would be easy to deceive her.

She was not one to love by halves, and she loved little Maureen entirely. She was of the lonely-natured ones that have never given away their feelings in bits here and there, and so have a deal to give when the time comes. She loved Maureen like a mother long childless.

"Brigid, child," said the priest to her once, "how will it go with Maureen when you bring home a husband and have children of your own?"

"I've never yet seen the man I'd put master over me," said Brigid; "but if it should come so, Maureen won't be the loser, father."

She was capable of any rashness of generosity to Maureen in those days. After the priest had spoken with her he went away and said that the boys might as well give up cocking their caps at Brigid. Better by far, he said, wait till Maureen was marriageable and send the matchmaker to Brigid for her. But though he said it with a twinkling eye, and was

ever a man for a joke, people said there was sense in it.

Years went, and Maureen was growing a big slip of a girl, and Brigid no longer as young as she had been. In those parts, where a man keeps young while he is unmarried and a girl is old at twenty-five, Brigid began to be looked upon as an old maid. Little by little the matchmakers had grown tired of her rebuffs, and the lads betaken themselves to more willing sweethearts. It seemed like enough that there would be no marriage made under Brigid's roof till little Maureen's turn came. For no one ever supposed that Brigid would have passed by all the straight, handsome lads, with no reproach to them but their poverty, to take up at last with Tom Dwyer.

Still, stranger things have happened, and Tom Dwyer's persistence knew no bounds. He was a little, elderly, ugly fellow, and the only thing that could be said for him was that he wasn't a fortune-hunter, for he was well off himself, and could have had his pick of the rich farmers' daughters over Omagh side. But Brigid never looked his way nor gave him the kind word, so it seemed like enough he'd have his perseverance for nothing.

When Maureen was fifteen and a pretty slip of a thing, as white and soft as bog-cotton, what should Brigid do but send her to boarding-school at the convent at Omagh.

"You got on yourself without the book-learning, Brigid Neilly," said Mary Lavery to her, and she stood for the opinion of the neighbours. "What is she that she should be better than you?"

"I know more what the want of it is," Brigid answered, more patiently than she was used to.

"What'll you do with her after?" asked Mary Lavery again. "You make her too good for her place."

"Then her place must come up to her," said Brigid; and the saying was a dark one to the neighbours, but they got nothing more for answer.

It was while Maureen was at the convent that Dan Heffernan came into Brigid's life. He was the son of a farmer from the Finn valley, and nephew to Molsheen Heffernan, who, dying in the fall of the year, left her little place to the boy she had never seen. It wasn't much of a place: a little cabin with two windows upon the flank of Slievedhu, and looking into Brigid's kitchen chimney: a few fields all heather and bog-cotton. But the place was the woman's own to leave, and the little fields might come to something in the hands of a strapping lad like Dan.

He came into the bog-land like a bit of sunshine. He had travelled about to places where there are no mountains up in the sky, and the cry of the sea is never heard. Lonesome it would be to them who

opened their eyes on the mountains and heard first the sea-song; but if it wasn't in your blood to care for these things, maybe the country like a garden, that Dan Heffernan talked about, would be likelier to make you bright and laughing as Dan was.

He set out to dig old Molsheen's fields as if he had a lifetime to do it in, instead of getting the land ready for the potatoes this side of Christmas. It was a mild, bright autumn, and the storms delayed longer than usual; and to watch Dan Heffernan at the digging, you'd think he had the year before him.

Sing he would at his work, a thing unknown among the sad-faced people thereabouts; and his heart was more in the singing than in the digging. If but the smallest child went by the road he'd be streeling over for a bit of a talk, and presently the neighbours found out what a pleasant lad he was, and one or another would come discoursing him for half-an-hour or so—and a pleasant half-hour in the shelter of a sunny ditch, with a smoke, for as long as he had a pipeful he'd share it with another. Only Father Pat shook his head at his new parishioner.

"You're not used to our land, Dan," he said. "It takes more patience than a young child. Go on as you're going, my lad, and you won't see a potato the year."

"Plenty of time, father," Dan would respond with

his winning smile. "I'll put the *comether* over them as soon as I set to work in earnest."

He walked into Brigid Neilly's kitchen one day to beg a sod of turf for a light for his pipe. Brigid answered him shortly, for she wasn't under Molsheen's farm not to know the way the lad was idling his time. But Dan's eyes were full of admiration as he looked at her churning, and her round arms, brown and beautiful, bare to above the elbow.

He bent to the smouldering turf to blow it into a glow. As he lifted his head, he smiled at Brigid, whose grave eyes were upon him. It was his way to smile roguishly at women; but something went through Brigid like a shock. Her arms for a moment jerked at the churning and stopped. Then she went on again, but the long lashes lay over her eyes, and the waves of colour were throbbing from her heart over her bosom and neck and into her quiet face.

It was the beginning of Brigid's infatuation for Dan Heffernan that set all the wise women wagging their heads, and troubled Father Pat, who knew all Brigid's thoughts, and how simple she was under her cleverness, and how generous in giving her love. He was sorrowful, but he let Brigid go her way, and soon Dan Heffernan was walking Brigid's fields like a master, and Molsheen's land was left with the spade sticking in the bit of it that was turned to show Dan Heffernan's industry.

There were things said, be sure, and many a laugh over Brigid's infatuation for a boy ten years her junior. But Brigid heard none of them, and went about handsomer than ever, as if a life had come into her beauty and made it glow and burn.

The most ill-natured couldn't say she was to be married for her money. Let alone that a child could see Dan Heffernan had no craft in him, it was plain that he doted on Brigid. Something came over him in those days that made Father Pat, quietly observant, whisper to himself that maybe Brigid was going to make a man of the lad. There was that in Dan's careless blue eyes when he looked at her that said he knew he wasn't good enough for her. "Nor you wouldn't be, Dan, my boy," said the priest under his breath, after he had surprised that look, "not if you were a thousand times the man you are." Still, he knew that the humility was a good sign.

Dan was for having the wedding at Easter, but Brigid in this one thing stood out against him. Maureen was to come home at the midsummer, and she must have time to get used to the change before they were married.

"She has always been the first," said Brigid simply, and her eyes had the pity of a woman's when her young child is pushed out of place by a later born.

"It is always Maureen, Maureen," said Dan

Heffernan, half laughing and half vexed. "You love her better than me, colleen oge."

"No," said Brigid. "I love you the best, or I would not be afraid to hurt her."

Maureen knew nothing of Dan Heffernan till she came home at midsummer, pale as a snowdrop in her black school-dress. Brigid told her when they were together in the room in the thatch which had been theirs for more than twelve years. She was beautiful as she told it, all flushed with love and joy, and her arms open for Maureen to come to her. But Maureen's blue eyes grew wider and harder, and dismay covered all her small face. Instead of going into Brigid's loving embrace she turned away her face—dark and frightened.

"But what is to become of *me*, Brigid Neilly? Tell me that. What is to become of *me*?" she asked, with cold lips.

Brigid drew her to her.

"What is to become of *you*, Maureen bawn asthore?" she cried. "What is to become of *you*? Why, things will be as they have been. Whisper, avourneen. I have made my will, and it is with the counsellor at Fintona, and if I die you take half and Dan takes half. You have your right in this house, Maureen."

"What talk have you of counsellors and wills, Brigid Neilly?" said Maureen fretfully. "You will

bring in a strange man to the house, and I shall have no place—I shall have no place.”

And so she said for all Brigid's comforting, and Brigid watched her with the eyes of a mother who is sore at heart for her child's jealousy, yet loves it the more.

Maureen turned a sullen face on Dan Heffernan when he came in out of the late sunset, and the gold of it on his hair. Dan was of the kind that is not happy under a frown, and he set himself to win Maureen's favour. At first he went about it laughing, for Maureen was only a child. But Maureen turned her face from him the more.

“He looks at you as if you were the queen of the world,” she complained to Brigid, “and me he treats with mockery. Am I a child, to be laughed at?”

After that Brigid spoke to Dan Heffernan that he should try to win the child's friendship by greater gravity, and he altered his ways to please her. But for long he had no reward for his patience and his gentle ways with Maureen, except only the grave smile of approval with which Brigid watched him at his difficult task.

Soon it was September, and people were beginning to wonder if it was not time for Brigid's wedding. Brigid herself had not forgotten that she had promised Dan they should be married about the quarter-day, but of late they had not spoken of it.

Dan had fallen silent after a time of urging an immediate marriage, when to all his prayers Brigid had answered only: "Give me time. Let Maureen come round. I couldn't be happy if she were unhappy," and this time Dan had not reproached her with loving Maureen before him. Perhaps he knew better.

At last the day was fixed, quite suddenly in the end, for Father Pat was going on a holiday, and would have no one but himself to do the marrying of Brigid.

"Let Maureen go back to the convent," he said. "A third is not in place in the house of a newly-married couple. Afterwards, Brigid child, what will you do with her?"

"She will stay here," answered Brigid, with eyes of amazement. "This is her home."

"Send her back to her mother's people," urged Father Pat. "Make what provision you like for her, but send her back."

"Ah!" said Brigid, "you think the jealousy will be on her, and she will make a shadow by my hearth. But she is a child, and the jealousy will pass."

"Be said by me, Brigid," urged the priest. "Send her home to her own people."

But Brigid shook her head, and the priest said no more.

Her wedding-clothes were made, and her house was set in order, when one night she wakened in the early moonlight and missed Maureen's soft breathing from her little bed in its dark corner. Usually Brigid was a sound sleeper, because of her industrious life all the long days in the fields, but approaching her wedding she was too happy for sleep.

She called Maureen once or twice, and received no answer. Then she sprang up in the moonlight, and went to the bedside; but there was no one there.

She went down the ladder into the kitchen. Shep, the collie dog, lay in the doorway as if on guard, and the place was full of moonlight from the open door. Brigid ran down the pathway from the gate calling Maureen's name, but there was no answer. A sudden great terror leapt into her heart. Could the child have wandered away from her into the world of which she knew so little? And, if so, where should she look for her? As she gazed frantically up and down the bare patches of bog the dog tugged at her skirt.

"Ah," sighed Brigid, with great relief, "you know where she is! Take me to her, good dog; good old Shep."

The dog looked up at her, and then led the way. Brigid followed. It took her through the

stack-yard, and down the rutty boreen to a group of hazel-trees in the middle of a little field overhanging a holy well. Far off Brigid saw the glimmer of something white, and guessed it to be Maureen. Her feet went on the quicker.

But as she came nearer she saw there were two people. With a great throb of fear that made her stop a minute, she saw that Maureen had flung herself on the neck of a man. She could see the girl's face lifted in the moonlight, but the man was half turned away, and he looked as though his eyes were on the ground.

Brigid was for rushing forward to snatch her lamb from this wolf who had led her into deceit and stolen meetings by night, but before she could do anything, Maureen's voice broke out in words that turned Brigid's heart to stone.

"You think too much of her, Dan Heffernan," the voice complained. "Too much of her and too little of me. She is old and we are young. It is we should be happy, and not her."

"Whisht, Maureen darling," said the man. "She is as much too good for me as the saints above. But her heart is in me. Are we going to break her heart?"

Brigid listened to Dan's struggle to be true to her without hearing. Maureen's words had seemed to kill something in her suddenly. It was enough

for her to see them there, Dan's arms tight around Maureen, Dan's lips upon her hair. As she turned and went back, Dan's voice followed her, but she heard without knowing what he said.

"Come, asthoreen," he was saying. "Let me take you home. 'Tis no right thing for a little girl to be out like this, and I'd no business to be listenin' to you when you asked me to come."

Brigid lay all night cold as a stone.

When the day came she stood by Maureen's bed and bade her go to her mother's people.

"Go," she said bitterly, "and never darken my door again. If you were starving I would keep a crust from you; if you were dying of thirst I would keep water from you. Go, while you are safe from me."

She went out of her house and stayed away till evening, and when she came back Maureen was gone. A day or two later all the neighbours knew that Maureen had gone to her mother's people, and that Dan Heffernan had followed her. Then there was pity for Brigid; but the first comers with curious sympathy found the door shut in their faces. Even Father Pat, who loved Brigid like a father, fell silent before her white face. "Better let her be," he said to himself, as he turned from her door with his head on his breast. "Only God can heal such a wound."

But sensations were not over. Before Father Pat could start on his holiday, Tom Dwyer was with him on a business which made the priest stare with surprise and dismay. Brigid's wedding-day was fixed. There was to be no alteration except in the bridegroom. Father Pat implored Brigid to wait—not to marry in a moment of anger and despair. Brigid looked at him with a set face, and again he fell silent. On a wet autumn morning, when the rain beat against the windows of the mountain chapel, and the little crops of poor people were washed out of the earth, Tom Dwyer and Brigid Neilly were made man and wife.

One condition Brigid had made was that Tom Dwyer should come to her house, not she to his, and so it was. They settled down together, and things went on well enough to all showing. Only Brigid's husband and the priest guessed at the tragedy behind Brigid's set face.

Dan Heffernan and his young wife were living up there in the cabin that looked down on Brigid's thatch. Tom Dwyer often cast an eye that way, and noticed that things looked poorer than ever. Rumours came to him that the young couple were not happy, and were very poor. Maureen hadn't the health for the hard life and the poverty, and though you might see Dan working day after day in the wet bits of fields, it was plain that the man

wasn't making much out of it. He lost his brightness and his handsome looks little by little. Maureen wailed and complained incessantly, till the heart would have been taken out of a better man than poor Dan.

If Brigid knew these things, she made no sign. She went her old way, managing her place, and buying and selling her cattle as of old, not as if her man had lifted anything of a burden off her. And, indeed, Tom had his own affairs to look to.

In the year that followed their marriage things did well with them—as well as they did badly up at Molsheen's farm. No one noticed except Tom, and maybe the priest, that the light had gone from Brigid's eye, and the colour from her cheek. But Tom knew it all; his love taught him.

He was a little, ugly fellow, this Tom Dwyer—yet when you knew him you forgot the plainness of his looks, for his heart was sound as a nut. Patient he was with Brigid, waiting and hoping for her heart to come to him. Yet if she noticed his kindness and his care for her, she never made him a sign.

It was near hand the time that Brigid was expecting her baby when Tom Dwyer first mentioned Dan Heffernan's name to his wife.

"There's sickness and poverty up there," he said, nodding his head towards the cabin above them,

"an' the woman near her time like yourself, Brigid asthore."

Brigid looked over her flourishing fields and laughed.

"What of it, Tom Dwyer?" she asked.

"She's your own flesh and blood, asthoreen," said the man timidly.

"I said I'd see her hungry and thirsty," answered Brigid. "I won't go back of my word."

"'Tis not the heart of you that's spakin', Brigid, my woman," said Tom Dwyer. "We can spare them something for the sake of the child her that are comin'."

But Brigid turned on him in a white fury, and bade him go out of her sight that dared to name the woman's child to her, and vowed again that she would see Maureen begging for life, and laugh to refuse it to her. And Tom Dwyer was frightened for her, and said no more.

Brigid's child came into the world, a weak, ailing little thing, that did nothing but cry and cry. But when it was born, Brigid seemed like a new woman. She lay with it against her breast, hush-o-ing to it, and with so soft and happy a smile on her face that they trembled to tell her the child had no strength to live. For a little while she held her heaven of happiness; then it seemed to drift from her, and as the knowledge came to her, it was as though some one was cutting bits of her heart

away with a knife. Yet, through all the fear and the anguish, her sound health brought herself back to life and strength.

It was after those hours when Brigid had watched the child dying, and prayed hard for God to take it, that she turned to her husband and gave him the first kiss of her own will. He had been more than woman-tender to her, and in that hour, for the first time, the two hearts met above the cradle of the dead child.

But all night, in the wind and the rain, Brigid heard her lamb crying outside in the night for the warm breast he had turned from; and the pain of the milk made her like one with a fever.

In the morning those that flock together where there is a death came into Brigid Dwyer's house. They came and went for hours, ate and drank, prayed, departed, and came again. Then through the fever of the milk and the crying of her lamb in the rain, Brigid Dwyer heard what some one was saying, that Maureen Heffernan was like to die, and the child pining to death for want of the breast-milk.

She stood up from the corner where she was sitting and drew her shawl about her head. Before they knew, she had gone out from amongst them. Her husband caught her up as she went. For a moment he thought her mind had given way.

Then, as he looked in her face, he saw the strange hope that had broken over it.

"Go back," she said, "and stay with him. I go to feed Maureen's child; and as I do to her may the Mother of God do to me and mine!"

She stood at the door of the wretched cabin where a gaunt man, the ghost of Dan Heffernan, crouched by the embers, and in the corner Maureen lay silent with the child creeping and crying against her. Dan Heffernan stood up and his face was humble.

"If you come in friendship, Brigid Dwyer, you are welcome," he said; "if you come in hatred your vengeance is here before you."

"My child is dead," she answered, "and he sends me to give his milk to your child."

As she said it her eyes looked at the man with indifference, hardly seeing him indeed. Her heart was with her dead lamb out in the rain, and what else there was was turning to the dead child's father.

She still stood at the threshold of the house, and on her face the brightness grew. "God save all here!" she said, with the familiar Irish greeting. Then she went to Maureen's side, and took up the crying baby. Hungrily, hungrily she held it to her breast, and as the child fed, her face grew almost happy. She heard no more the crying of her lamb in the rain; and softly, softly with the milk her tears began to flow.

So Brigid Dwyer took the child of the man and woman who had betrayed her and fostered it. And the child's mother came back to life in time, because of the ease and comfort that Brigid Dwyer brought her. But when she was well, and the child weaned, Brigid gave her the half of her farm, and went away to live with her husband the other side of the mountain.

THE FORGE

THE forge stood with its back to the mountains, and its face to the valley. From early morning to late evening the anvil rang, and golden showers of sparks rose and fell, while the smith in his shirt-sleeves whistled at his work. There was a duck-pond at the forge door; all spring, the frog-spawn lay on the water till the spawn became young frogs, and the water was alive with the quivering of multitudinous life. In summer evenings, after the noise of the anvil was done, and great-footed beasts no more threatened the frogs' home and families, the snoring of the frogs was like that of an army of sleeping drunkards. Sometimes the ducks waddled in a long line to the pond, and greedily gobbled a few dozen frogs, much in the manner we eat our oysters. Then the remainder of the frogs would dive out of sight into the deep mud below the duck-weed and the flag-lilies, and the ducks, with a quack of disappointment, would waddle back to the fowl-yard.

Young Michael Morrissy was in his grave, and old Michael, that ought to be there in his stead, still

cumbered the ground. None grudged the old man his seat in the chimney-corner nor his hour in the sun. Most times he hardly remembered about Michael's being dead, and took Patsy—Michael's son—for his dead father.

Patsy and Jemmy carried on the forge for their mother. Steady, willing boys they were, and good at their trade. Their father's end had steadied them. He had been kicked in the head by a horse he was shoeing in a state of half-drunkenness. Patsy had been fond of his pint and the card-playing before that, and Jemmy was beginning to follow in his footsteps, but the shock of the father's death had sobered them.

It was in the family to be good at smith's work. Then the lads were always to be found at the forge, and even in off-hours were not unwilling to turn out and put on a shoe in case of emergency. They got plenty of work. All day the open space before the forge was full of horses, couples of them led by a tiny urchin scarcely up to their knee-joints and very important, or horses in harness led out from the shafts of the carts to get a shoe replaced that had been knocked off by the rough shingle of the road.

Patsy had a way with the horses. The most nervous and tricky of them would be quiet in his hands, as he half knelt, holding the great hoof, and uttering a low caressing *susurrus*, at the sound of

which the large eyes of the creatures would gaze at him full of contentment.

Old Michael, crawling about like a winter-over-taken fly on a warm pane, would nod his head a great many times as he watched Patsy at the work.

"Good boy, Michael," he would say, mistaking him for his father. "You're meself over again with the horses. They're knowledgable crathurs, but terrible aisy frightened. Horses is like women. They require the soothin' word an' the strong gentle touch. But there's not many has the sense to give it to them."

"Thru for you, sir," his grandson would reply. "Not that I'm to be named in the same day wid yourself. 'Twas only yesterday Mr. Doolan was sayin', 'There's not a smith in the country to aigual Mr. Morrissy as I knew him. Yez are good boys,' he says, 'but smith's work is not the same as I remember it.'"

"See that now, my dear," says the old fellow, hugely pleased. "A dacint man Terry Doolan ever an' always, an' I remember him, man an' boy, a matter of—I disremember how many years now. My memory is not what it was."

"I think herself is calling you in to your tay," says the other, irrelevantly.

"Not at all, my dear. She's gone wid a basket of eggs to the village, and she won't be in a hurry back,

for she knows I'm well employed about the forge. Michael dear," wheedlingly, "let me shoe a horse to meself. I'm often hungry for the feel of the hoof in my hand."

"Don't be talkin' of the like. Sure I know I'm not in it wid you, an' the people 'ud be only dissatisfied with my work if they got a bit of yours."

The old fellow smiled and nodded, but after a minute or two grew restless.

"'Tis tired I am sittin' widin there wid herself, like as if I was a-past my work. 'Tis hard, Michael dear, to be only in the way, an' an idle ould block, after bein' the biggest man, an' the best hurler, an' the finest smith in the country. It is so. I'm good for nothin' but catchin' the sparks in my fingers like the little childher; an' the younger men has the work."

"Listen to him! You're no more a-past your work nor I am. Sure you're taichin' me me trade. There you sit snug in the corner watchin' me, an' if I wasn't doin' right I'd be bound 'tis yourself would soon be down on me. Woa, Sheila! there now, me beauty!" to the mare. He was up on his feet now, and rubbing down her sleek neck. "Come here, Patsy Connor," he shouted. "The mare's shod. Tell your father to bring me in Boholaun."

The urchin led away the mare, and in a minute

the door of the forge was darkened by the big iron-grey horse Boholaun.

"Here's work for you now, sir," Patsy called cheerfully to the old man. "Just blow the fire into a hate for me."

The old fellow took the handle of the great smith's bellows half unwillingly.

"'Tis a gorsoon's job," he grumbled. "Anywan can blow the bellows, but anywan can't put on the shoe. I rared you to be terrible hard-hearted and unbiddable to your elders, Michael."

"Whisht, jewel. Don't be sayin' the like. Sure you wouldn't be makin' a show of me, takin' the work out of my hands. Aisy, Boholaun, hould up now—this foot, my fine fellow."

He began whistling to himself and forgot the old man. After a minute or two he looked up and missed him.

"He's got tired, poor ould sow!" he said, "an' has gone back to his settle. I must tell herself to keep a closer eye on him, and not have him walkin' about among the horses. His likin' for them is terrible strong still."

The man who had led in Boholaun had joined his fellows at the little shebeen over the way. In front of the forge there were still half-a-dozen horses standing. The urchin supposed to be in charge was sitting by the well-side trying to catch minnows

with a crooked pin. Patsy worked away at Boholaun's hooves. It was a quiet day, and Jemmy was off at the market with his mother's two calves.

A door at the side of the forge opened, and a pleasant brown face looked out. It was Mrs. Morrissy back from her excursion to the village. Behind her you could see a white, well-scrubbed table, and a white dresser full of crockery, and a square window in the smoke-browened wall with geraniums in pots.

The woman peered about anxiously.

"Is the ould man wid ye, Patsy?"

"Isn't he 'idin? He got tired divartin' himself, an' went off a while ago. Maybe he's ramblin' about wid himself in the sun."

He stood up and looked out of the forge door, and then uttered an exclamation:

"The crathur! Look where he's sittin' like an ould child!"

He made a couple of strong strides to the door. In between the long line of horses old Michael Morrissy was sitting on the ground. He held a horse's hoof in his hand, and was anxiously scrutinizing it. He gave a little start when his grandson approached him, and began to struggle up.

"You'll never be the smith your father was, my boy," he said. "They'd wear the shoe thin before they'd lose it in my day."

"Sure enough, sir. But there's herself home an' lookin' for you. I'm frightened to see you sittin' down there among the horses. You'll be gettin' hurt some day. Why, that wan you wor handlin' is wan of the greatest divils for kickin' in the country-side."

"They'd never kick me," said the old fellow, allowing himself to be led away. "An' if they did, what odds, so long as I was sober an' fit to go? There was a poor boy I knew wance—I disremember now; he had a look o' you, Michael—was killed by a kick, but he had drink taken, God forgive him, an' wasn't fit to appear before his Maker. I'm gettin' ould, Michael; I feel it in me bones. But I was always terrible fond of the horses, an' I think I'll die when I'm kep' from them."

He followed his daughter-in-law into the comfortable kitchen, where the kettle was boiling on the hob. As the door closed behind him, Boholaun's owner came in for his steed.

"Where d'ye think I found th' ould man?" said Patsy, with a scared face, "but betune the feet of the horses, an' Rooney's kickin' mare wid her hoof in his lap! Jemmy 'll be in a fine state when he hears it. He'll be killt some day. He won't be kep' from the horses; an' he's that cute, take your eye off him an' he's among them. He's a fine ould man, but he's a great care on the mind."

"They say the likes of him is took care of," said Boholaun's owner; "little childher or helpless ould aged min and women. Meself, I'd trust the bastes wid them. The bastes know, an' I don't believe there's wan o' them 'ud let fly a kick at an ould child like him."

THE ENEMY OF GOD

It was when the child died that Tom O'Keeffe uttered his first blasphemy against God.

"Don't tell me that it is the will of God," he said to the pale-faced curate who tried to comfort him. "'Tis more like the will of the divil, if divil there is or God ayther. 'Tis a divil's act to rob me first of Mary, and then of the child. What do you know of the loss of a woman and a child that never had the like nor ever will have?"

"God help you, Tom," said the curate, lifting his hands in horror, "and forgive you! The trouble has driven you mad surely."

For it was the first time in that parish, since St. Patrick had turned men from idols, that any had said there was no God, or had stiffened his neck against the yoke, however heavy, He would lay upon it.

The mood did not pass with the first despair, as the curate had hoped.

The third day after the death Tom carried the little coffin in his arms, to lay it in the new grave, that was only opened a year before for his young wife. A little coffin it was, yet the sweat was on

the man's white face, as though he were carrying the heavy world.

A group of the neighbours waited by the grave. Tom's terrible way of taking the child's death had indeed caused something of a scandal, but talking it over the most of the people were agreed that God would not take seriously, or perhaps would not pretend to hear, the man's denial of Him.

"'Tis like a sick child," said Judy Malone, who had lost her seven children in the great famine. "You'd never know them, they do be that cranky an' impident when they're down, but who'd be remembrin' it agin them, the crathurs, wance they're about again?"

They drew closer to Tom as he laid the little coffin in the grave and hid it with the clay. Then, as he put on his coat and turned to go, an old man approached him.

"God help you, Tom," he said, "to be a man and bear it."

Tom turned a ghastly face upon him.

"There's no God," he said. "I think there's a divil; but I'm sure there's no God."

After that people held away from him, but he didn't seem to know or care. And presently, when it was haymaking-time, the roaming fit came upon him, and he left his spade stuck in the ground one day, and was off with the harvesters to England.

"He'll come back in his right mind," said the curate, who had a tenderness for poor Tom even now.

Maybe he might have, too, only that when the harvest was over, instead of going back with the other men to Ballygrua, he tramped to Liverpool and got taken on as a dock-labourer.

He was still sick of his trouble, when one day he stopped in the street to hear a man who was preaching on the pavement that there was no God, and that the image men had formed of Him was a tyranny that blasted the joy of the world. The things the preacher said went to Tom's head like strong drink. It wasn't in him, though he didn't know it, really to disbelieve in God. He said, "There is no God," but all the time he hated that Power which had robbed him of his wife and child, and had a blind desire to insult, to outrage, to destroy if he might, the image he had formed to himself of a devil-God.

He remained a year in Liverpool, and was known at every hall and below every platform where men said like himself, that there was no God, hating God all the time.

For Tom, unbelief meant no easy way for the sins of the flesh, as it might have meant with another. He was an abstemious man by nature, and the coarse vices only sickened him when he saw them in others.

But he grew paler every day, and his eyes greater in his head. He worked like a man consumed by an inward fire; and so he was with the fire of his hatred for God and his futile thirst for revenge upon Him.

Then one day he went home. The grave in St. Declan's churchyard at Ballygrua was calling him, and he had a sudden loathing of the fine and murky streets he knew. It seemed to him that there was one little plot of earth his own for ever, and he was home-sick to look upon it. It was not his wretched bit of mountain and bog; it was the sacred grave that tugged at his heart-strings.

He opened his cabin door one wet spring afternoon and went in, as if he had been only gone one hour. The place smelt mouldily, and the rain dripped through a hole in the thatch; the white ashes of last year's fire lay upon the hearth. He looked out of the window, and saw the spade sticking in the earth where he had left it.

"'Tis time to be turnin' the ground again for the seedin'," he said to himself, and taking off his coat he went out and turned a portion of the sod.

He didn't look for living long, people thought, but there was nothing the matter with him, really, save that consuming hatred. The pursuit of it took him to the public-house, the most likely ground in which to sow his tares in other men's minds. When men

had drink taken they didn't mind a little wild talk, and what they got accustomed to when warm with the drink soon didn't shock them when they were sober.

There were one or two returned Irish-Americans in the village, who had come back because they were no more use to the country they went to than the country they had left. Tom wasn't likely to shock them. They listened with a cynical grin to his wild speeches, and applauded him to further violence. Not that Tom wanted them—he wanted believers; but these fellows served his turn, for they encouraged the more timid ones who didn't like to seem untravelled men, and not used to the ways of the world.

The curate did what he could. His love of God was as real a thing as Tom's hatred, but strive how he would, that little centre of infection that was Tom grew and extended its shadow in the place. The people, even those who were not to be turned, shuddered no longer when they heard it said there was no God.

They had looked at first for His lightnings to fall, but He made no more sign than the old gods St. Patrick had overthrown. Some yet said that in His own time He would strike; but others, and they were mainly young men, felt that Tom's defiance of Him was somehow a fine thing justified, since He did not

trouble to defend Himself. So, little by little, the number of those who came to listen to Tom was increased, and for some it was pleasanter to hear there was no God, since there were so many desirable things His law had forbidden.

The curate wasted himself in prayer against this blasting evil which had grown among his people. He was not the one to go down to the public-house or among the little parliaments in the forge, to answer Tom and confute him. Perhaps if he had, the knots of men who were not afraid of God might have melted like snow before his meek face. Perhaps he might have worsted Tom in a wordy conflict, and carried his stray sheep back to God in a wave of admiration and wonder. But he did not attempt it. He was not the militant sort. He contented himself with calling God to take His own part and save his people; and his prayers went on day-long and night-long, till he was like a ghost from watching and fasting, and extremity of prayer.

During this time Tom did not go much to the churchyard. Indeed, once he had satisfied his hunger to look upon the plot that held his all, he went there no more. He knew that Mary would be unhappy if she could know the thing he was doing; and woman-like, would not understand that it was because he loved her and the child so much. He mocked at heaven as a delusion, and yet standing

by the grave in Ballygrua churchyard, he felt ill at ease, as if somewhere she must know and would turn him from his purpose.

He did not take to drink, though he went so often to the public-house. He was but a poor customer himself; but he brought others, and the publican, who was miserly, did not complain. Those hours of his propaganda were what kept Tom O'Keeffe alive during the long days, when he dug and planted the bit of land on the mountain side. He had not departed from the old industrious ways that were his while Mary was alive. He had mended his thatch and repaired his floor, and replenished his turf stack, and then set to work to reclaim another little bit of land from the mountain, and another, and another. It was fierce work, and entailed labour fitter for a beast than a man, but he liked it; it was of a piece with his war against that silent and impassive God who had taken his all.

It was a year since Tom had come home, and still the number of his disciples grew.

One night, the blackest night it was, though there were points of stars in the black, and now and again a meteor trailed its fiery length across heaven ere it leaped to earth, Tom was going home from the public-house.

He was in a very black part of the road, where trees, over-arching, made a matted roof of boughs,

and he could hear far below the sighing of the surf, when he saw, a little way ahead in the road, a light no bigger than a will-o'-the-wisp.

It was coming towards him, and then it was at his side, and circling about him; and he felt the air growing lighter and lighter. Presently the thing took shape, and he saw it was like a tree—yes, just like the burning bush of which the curate had told in his sermon.

He saw the leaves plain, all glittering, for they had a hard bright surface like holly, and the little tips of them were small flames, radiant and not burning. On one side of the tree there was a nebulous brightness, white and sharp, and at first Tom could not make out what it held.

Then little by little he saw. And what he saw was his own Patsy, whom he had laid in the coffin himself more than two years ago, and covered with the sods in the churchyard. The child was looking at him. He saw the soft, innocent little features, and the eyes with their deep irises, and the pretty hair curling in tiny rings at the neck. The little figure perched as prettily among the lit boughs as a robin in the holly.

Tom went down on his knees in the middle of the road, and stretched his hands to the radiant figure. He would have seized it, if he could, and held it to his hungry heart, but something invisible

beat him back. It was as though he saw his bird in a cage; and his hungry desire to snatch him for an instant to his breast had something wolfish in it.

"Patsy," he panted, "is it you, Patsy?"

"It is I, dada," answered the little voice, that had been sweeter to him than ever the birds of heaven could be.

"But your grave is in Ballygrua," said the man. "I buried you there myself."

"Not my soul, dada, only my body."

"Where have you been since, Patsy? And where is your mother that she doesn't come too?"

"She is in heaven, praying for you; and I cannot go to her."

"What keeps you out of heaven, Patsy?" asked the man, and his hands worked at the thought of his invisible Enemy.

"Not God, dada, but you."

"Oh, my God!" said the man, returning unconsciously to the cry of the anguished. "How do I keep you out, Patsy—I who would stay in hell for ever to buy you an hour of heaven?"

"Look about you and see."

Tom O'Keeffe peered about him in the darkness. Then he saw beyond the circle of the light, fangs and claws, and eyes of torment innumerable, and the eyes gloated towards him. But where the light from the child and his tree fell upon the road, there

was a sharp circle, and within that space was clear of the demons.

"They come nearer and nearer," said little Patsy. "Every minute they remind God that your cup is full. 'Tis only for my sake and mother's that God has patience. Your angel went back to heaven long ago. If I left you, you would be lost."

"Don't stay with me, Patsy agra," said the man, "if you would rather be in heaven."

"Because of you," went on the child, unheeding, "I have never crossed its door, I have never tasted its blessedness. God allows it. The other children are with God and Our Blessed Lady in heaven. I keep my watch still on earth."

"An' it's dada that's keepin' you, Patsy?" asked the father.

"It is then," said the child. "There are millions and millions of children in heaven, this night, all singing God's praises while the angels light the tapers."

Something of longing in the child's voice stabbed the man's heart.

"Is it lonesome out of heaven, Patsy?" he asked.

"It is lonesome. And I cannot sleep by night or day for watching you, lest the fiends seize you. The other children have their beds of down, where they rest when the sleep takes them."

"How long have you been watching over me, Patsy?"

"Since you laid my body in the churchyard and said, 'There is no God.'"

"Oh, my God!" cried the man again—"two years and a half-year! It is a long time to keep you between earth and heaven, Patsy."

"'Tis an eternity," said the child.

"Listen now, Patsy. A poor old battered soul like mine isn't worth it. Leave me to the torture, and go to your mother in heaven."

The child smiled—a strange, wise smile for a little lad.

"Am I to go, dada?"

"Yes, go, Patsy. But if you can, kiss me once before you go—it will keep the dew on my lips."

The child leant out of the tree and kissed him; and the heart-hunger of the man was assuaged as by a delicious draught.

"Now go, Patsy," he panted. "I am ready for the torture."

"Not till you save yourself, dada, and set me free."

"How can I do it, Patsy? I have sinned beyond forgiveness."

"But you have loved much," said the wise child. "And God forgives much to love. Besides, He pardons when He is asked for pardon. Kneel down

there in the road, make an act of contrition, and sign yourself with the sign."

The man did as he was bid.

"Now," said the child, "look about you."

Tom O'Keeffe peered into the darkness. It was thick as ever, and yet he could see the wings of the black angels like bats in twilight, flying away huddled together, as if in mortal terror.

At the same time the tree with the child in it began to rise and float away from him.

"Where are you going, Patsy?" cried the father.

"To my mother in heaven with God who is love," said the child, waving his hands towards him and seeming to rise as the flame mounts upward.

* * * * *

In the black hours of the early winter morning the curate was awakened by a visitor knocking at his door.

"Is it a sick call?" he asked, putting his head out of the window.

"A soul sick to death," came the reply.

The curate went down-stairs and opened the door to the one he took to be the messenger. To his amazement Tom O'Keeffe stumbled in and fell on the floor at his feet.

"Give me absolution," he panted, "lest I die in my sins."

The curate lifted the sinner affectionately, and led

him into his parlour, rejoicing, as his Master before him, over the sheep which was lost.

The news of Tom's conversion spread far and wide, and if he had drawn crowds to hear him before, more came now, for it was said he had had a supernatural visitation. But Tom had nothing to tell them, only over and over again, the words with which little Patsy had left him—"God is love. God is love!" and as he said it to them the tears ran down his face.

Tom O'Keeffe died the other day a very old man, with the reputation of a saint. He had led more sinners to God than ever he had drawn away from Him, with his simple gospel that was the last word on his lips.

They say now in that part of the country, when there is a death, or troubles are hard to bear, "Well, sure, God is love, as old Tom O'Keeffe, Lord rest him, used to say."

THE THREE SONS

THEY lived far out of the world at the back of Godspeed—Thady Farrell, and Judy his wife, and three brave sons. Their little house faced the south, and there was a mountain at the back of it to shelter it from the north wind. Perhaps for this reason, perhaps by reason of the stout labour that went into it, the farm did better than most, and plenty of a sort was never absent from the fireside.

Judy was delicate, a little violet-eyed, peachy-cheeked old woman, whom you would never have suspected of being the mother of the three. She used to sit spinning and carding her wool by the sunny door in summer, by the hearth-side in winter, while the boys and old Thady were at work on the bit of land, or foraging for the few sheep up on the mountain-side.

Living so long alone made her dreamy. She believed in all manner of fairies and ghosts, always of the gentler kind. An autumn leaf skipping on the floor was a little russet-clad gentleman to her short-sighted eyes, and the wind in the rushes out there on the bog the fairy fifers and fluters.

She knew a deal of old stories and rhymes and *ranns*. It was well, since they were so lonely, that her stock seemed inexhaustible, and it helped that the lads were simple and liked an old story almost as well as a new. She drew from her store for them of an evening, while they mended nets or plaited rushes for the potato-baskets. Somewhere over the mountain was a village with the usual opportunities for boys to make fools or worse of themselves. But they never seemed to desire any company but that of their parents and each other.

And Judy, though she was delicate, was as blithe as a lark.

By and by, she often said to Thady, they must think of getting Con married. Con was the eldest and strongest of the three. And after a few years more Manus must be having a wife and babies of his own. But about Hugh, the youngest, she never said a word.

Much as she loved the others, Hugh was her own son, the mother's boy. Hugh had been the shepherd of the mountain sheep for many a year, and, like his mother, had learnt to people the solitude with dreams and fancies. To lie in the heather of a summer's day, and hear the bees in the bells; to track a little streamlet as far as he dared wander along its bed of mossy rock and pebble, with now and then a silver fin in the golden waters; to scoop himself a rock-

cave, and heap it with dry bracken against the winter—such simple things were the boy's delight. And if you had come upon him lying on the mountain-side, with his chin in his hand, and his pale blue eyes gazing far away, you could not but have wondered what visions were his.

Now and again a wayfarer came by where Judy sat at her knitting and spinning, and paused for a noggin of milk, a sod for the pipe, and a few words about what was going on in the world. It might be only a man driving cattle to a fair, or again, three or four times a year, it might be a pedlar.

From the pedlar's pack Judy would purchase with eager flush and a trembling hand a sheaf of ballads; and from him she would hear the news of the great world, what things were happening in Dublin or at the French Court, and what hopes there were for Granuaile.

At last one day John Finneran, called the Freckled, brought stirring news. He was a stout fellow, and as ripe for fighting as any soldier of the King.

"Great news, *vanithee*!" he called out as he came along the bog-road between the rushes. "Sarsfield has need of soldiers. The French have landed, and Sarsfield has need of soldiers."

"What do you tell me?" she said. "It was all over at the battle of the Boyne. What hope is there till the Blackbird shall bring the spring?"

"Why, we shall be making his nest, woman!" cried Finneran the Freckled. "The English army is lying before Athlone, and Sarsfield and the French hold the town. They need men. Here, take your songs. I am giving up the pack for a musket. See you, now, I am the cricket that goes before the spring."

He burst into a shout of song:

"Viva la, the White Cockade!"

and as he sung it he flung his pack on the causeway before the door and stepped proudly, as though already he felt a soldier's trappings on his back.

The old woman watched him half fearfully as he paced to and fro. Presently he turned on her an eye blue and bright, that seemed to her as hard as steel.

"Sarsfield 'll be wanting men," he said again.

The hands trembled and the little old head shook. Then, like a bird that flies a few paces to lead the stranger away from its nest, she came out into the sun.

"'Tis a fine soldier you'll be making yourself, Jack Finneran," she said; but though her voice was wheedling, her eye wandered as if in search of help, and her mouth had suddenly become dry.

"'Tis the fine soldier Con 'll be making," said he relentlessly.

"Ah, not Con," she cried, flinging out her helpless

old hands. "Con was the first. We were long married when he came, and I had given up hopes of a child. Con brought us the youth again."

"There's a fine soldier all ready in Manus," he said.

"I remember the time," she said dreamily, "when Manus was like to die. We had given him to God, and we loved him the better when he was given back. Manus is a good boy, a very gentle boy, and quiet as a sheep. What chance would he have among soldiers? He is the fisherman too; we should often go hungry but for Manus."

"Why, then," he said, with the same unchanging good-humour, "it must be Hugh. There is better work for a lad to do these days than lying out in the sun to feel it warm his lazy bones."

"Ah, not Hugh," she cried, suddenly fierce; "go your way, John Finneran. You shall not have my Hugh, for he is my baby. Go and tell Sarsfield I will not give him Hugh."

"What? Not Con, and not Manus, and not Hugh. Listen! there is great honour and glory here in my pack for the lads. A soldier, *vanithee*, has all the chances. Why, there is Lauzun, a nobody, yet he went near to marry the King of France's sister."

"You have only blathers on your tongue, Finne-ran," she said. "Not of such things have my dreams been."

"You are too much alone, old mother," the man said more softly. "What are dreams?"

"Mine are true. I knew trouble was coming, for I dreamt of night and blood, and the three coffins for the lads. And the sky was full of the wild geese flying on the storm-wind. Soon all the nests will be empty."

"You are too much alone," he said again, and his voice was pitying.

Then he suddenly took a new tone.

"When the lads hear it they will be wild to go," he said, "and you have made them what they are."

"They will be wild to go," she repeated after him, "and I have made them what they are."

"Yes, you, with your old songs and stories. Why, they drank your dreams in with your milk. You sang of Granuaile and her sorrows while you rocked the cradle. You have rooted it too deeply, Judy Farrell. It is theirs till they die, the love that has been many a fine fellow's doom, and will be many another's."

She said no more, for she knew he spoke the truth; and though she was only a woman, and frightened for those she loved, there was Thady to stand by the boys and against her.

"They will cry shame on you," said the pedlar, and his eyes were only a narrow glint between the lids. "They will cry shame on you, that of three

sons you will not give one to Granuaile. Be the woman you were, and send them from you with pride."

"'Tis all very well for you, Jack Finneran," she said, and her voice had a wail of despair. "What do you know of such things, that care only for fighting and drinking, and offering love to every woman that comes your way? I know how 'twill be. You will have Con, and Con will not be enough. You will take Manus, and then you will ask for my Hugh. But you shall not have him."

"For Granuaile, gossip?"

"It is Granuaile's way. She takes them all. What does she know, she who never dies, of a mortal mother's heart?"

"In three days more I will come this way, and Con will be ready. Don't hinder him, woman, with crying and screeching. Could you have brought him into the world for better?"

She said nothing, but only turned away her head. And that evening, when the lads came home with their father, she told the great news in a dying voice.

Then Con and Manus stood up and shouted, and flung their caps over the cabin, as they would over the moon if she had stooped low enough. But Hugh turned and looked at his mother yearningly. And though she did not answer his look, she knew

in her foreboding heart that the glory beckoned him, and the martyrdom, as they did not his duller brothers.

"Let Con go," she said, still in her heartsick voice. "Afterwards it will be time enough for Manus and Hugh."

The old man to whom she had borne the sons looked at her in wonder, which had a little tinge of contempt.

"'Tis the way of women," he said. "They sing songs of war in the time of peace; but when the call comes they hinder the lads with their moping and their foolish, old, fearful ways."

Then Hugh went and kissed his mother, and she caught at him a moment, as one sucked into a swirling mid-current catches at a stick or a straw.

The day Con went Judy began to be a sick woman. That was exquisite May weather, and the thorns on the flank of the mountains were white as the snow in winter. Even the bog grew golden over its brown, and every pool in it edged with golden iris and bog-cotton was like an eye of heaven. The little lambs were bleating on the hill-side, and the lark hung suspended in mid-air all day long quivering with his rapture. But Judy crawled about like a fly in late autumn, which the frosty sun warms not nor gladdens.

The days turned round to June, and the boys and

Thady were talking of the fine hay crop, when one day Freckled Finneran came down the way. He was a bit pale under his tan, and he limped; he carried himself with a swagger as was his way, but his insolence failed him when he met Judy's eye.

"What news of Con?" she called to him, in a voice scarcely bigger than a grasshopper's.

"Great news, *vanithee*," he called back; but his answer quavered. "You have a son who will be remembered as long as Granuaile remembers her heroes."

"Con is dead," she said faintly. "I saw him dead in my dream."

"With Sarsfield's decoration on his breast," he replied—"was that in the dream? Listen, mother of a hero. The Williamites had made a bridge across the Shannon. They were in act to ford the river. Then did your Con, with nine others, God rest them, under stout Sergeant Maxwell, sally out and tear up the bridge under the fire of the guns. They were mown down, as you mow down the bog-rushes out there; and eleven others as brave that followed them. Con came back to us with the river in flood. And Sarsfield himself pinned the French King's medal on his breast, and kissed him, as I saw with my own eyes. 'Tell his mother,' he said, 'that Patrick Sarsfield prays to die such a death when his time comes.'"

"I knew how it would be," she said. "And now you are come for Manus. I could not keep him if I would."

And turning away she went indoors, and was alone with her dead, whose face she might never see.

In the evening Thady and Hugh returned without Manus. Manus was gone to take Con's place. Hugh was tender and pitiful to her as ever; but Thady would not hear of tears for Con. He was prouder than he had been even when the boy was born.

"Did you hear, woman," he said almost harshly, "that tears were in Sarsfield's eyes when he looked upon the boy? Let Sarsfield's tears be the only tears shed for Con. It is enough for you and me to bring forth sons whose glory should make Sarsfield weep."

But the next morning Judy did not rise out of bed as usual with the lark and the cricket. She lay there in the dawn, not speaking nor weeping, but helpless almost as the dead. Judy had begun to die with the news of the death of her first-born.

And Thady, though he had forbidden her to weep, showed in many ways his love for her. He and Hugh were up before day to cut the turf, and draw the water, and make the stirabout for breakfast. And though they had to go out to the haymaking, one or the other made several toilsome journeys during

the day to see that she wanted for nothing. She only asked to lie silent and watch the sun creep up the wall and the shadow on it of dancing leaves. She hardly showed signs of life, except sometimes when she would gather Hugh's hand convulsively to her breast, and hold it there to keep him yet a little while out of the cold grasp of death.

The pedlar came no more, and presently there came news over the mountain that Sarsfield's army was in retreat upon Aughrim, and that he had left many a fine fellow stark upon the Connaught side of Shannon. One of Sarsfield's men limping home with an incurable wound brought the tale.

"There was one Manus Farrell," said the narrator, "from this county. He was a soft fellow, and with the ways of a girl among the French soldiers. But Sarsfield thought different, and would have him near him, even that night of glory when he captured the siege-train at Ballyneety. He was carried off by a shell in the retreat from Athlone. The same shell knocked over John Finneran the Freckled, who used to carry a pack this way. He was the finest recruiting sergeant Sarsfield ever had. God rest both their souls!"

The news came first to Thady and Hugh, where they sat on a wall discussing the ripening oat crop in a little field no bigger than a tablecloth, but wrenched from the mountain with blood and sweat.

They stood bare-headed to hear it.

"I wish Con and Manus might have lain in holy ground," was all the father said.

And then Hugh answered him :

"There could be none holier than where they died."

Nothing more was said between them ; but Thady showed no surprise when, after the barefoot messenger of calamity had sped his way, Hugh took his coat from where it lay on the bank, and putting it on, turned his face towards the sun. His father watched him with proud eyes.

"But what shall I say to your mother, lad ?" he asked as Hugh turned to go.

"Say nothing. Everything has been said between us long ago. She knows I go because I must ; and if I am not taken I will gladly return to her. If not I shall die as Con and Manus died."

For a while after he had gone the old man stood shading his eyes, watching the slender young figure till it disappeared over the bog. Then he, too, put on his coat and went slowly down the mountain-side to his own cabin.

He found Judy lying watching the door, with her eyes very bright, and two red spots on her cheeks.

"I know what you are going to tell me," she said, when his shadow fell upon her bed. "Manus is dead, and Hugh is gone to the wars."

"He died gloriously."

"What do I care for glory? I want the child at my breast."

"Have patience and trust, woman. The Lord will surely protect Hugh, since he is our last."

He had turned away from her, and spoke low, as if ashamed of the comfort he was trying to give.

"The Lord's ways are not our ways," she answered. "What can it matter to Him that the young die and the old live on? They were happy here in the quiet and the sunshine. Why couldn't He leave them as they were?"

For in this moment of extreme sorrow she put her own deeds on the Lord, and forgot how she had suckled them and rocked them to sleep to her old dreams and stories of Granuaile, and kings and heroes.

After that the end seemed coming fast to Judy, and she complained no more. The days passed and there was no news of Hugh. But though Thady knew full well he would soon be left alone in the cabin where there had been five, he walked with an unbowed head.

All day he sat with the dying woman in a silent community of sorrow. Every night about midnight, leaving her asleep, he would take his stick and spend the hours before dawn tramping across the mountain to the village, where the first news would come.

The blacksmith, lighting his fire at dawn, would

see him come, and would walk a little way to meet him. Every morning for many days the word was the same.

"What news of the battle?"

"No news."

And then Thady would tramp back as he had come, and whisper to Judy, who lay like one already dead, that there was no news.

At last one golden day of August, when the corn stood in the stooks, there was news.

"God help you, Thady Farrell," said the blacksmith. "Your son lies dead on the sorrowful field of Aughrim. They say where he fought the Williamite dead lie thickest."

Thady lifted his head, and a spark kindled in his eye.

"Did I ask for my son?" he said. "How went the battle?"

"Mavrone! 'twas a lost day. The French general's head lies like a ball at the hurley; and Sarsfield is making his last stand in Limerick town."

"I knew it," muttered old Thady. "I knew it by my heart. And now how am I to tell Judy?"

He turned and tramped back silently. When he came to the little house the door was open, and the place flooded with sunshine. Judy was lying dead, with a smile on her face. She had found again the babies at her breast.

A BENEFACTOR

THE little house was just inside the dock-gates. When Patrick Donovan, the dock-watchman, had walked over the dock-side one foggy night, it had been a grace of the directors to allow his widow and children to occupy the cottage which had been theirs while he lived. There was a pension, too—a little, little pension—but it sufficed, with the money the widow earned by washing and mending the clothes of some of Pat's former comrades in the dock, to keep the wolf from the door.

No one but Susy Donovan knew how grateful the grace of the dock directors was. Night after night she put up her simple prayers for them, the great unapproachable gentlemen in black broadcloth, with gold chains meandering across their capacious chests, who attended a board-meeting in a city office once a month or so, and whose gold grew while they slept.

Sometimes on a rare visit to the dock, taking friends round, perhaps, one of them would notice the pretty cottage, and would pat a shy young Donovan's curly head benevolently. But it is to be doubted

that any one of them knew that it was the widow of the drowned watchman who inhabited the cottage, or remembered Patrick Donovan and his fate at all. Some one had brought the matter before them at a board-meeting, and they had given a benevolent and careless assent, and that was the end of it, so far as they were concerned.

But not so with Susy Donovan and her children. What it meant to them, or at least to Susy, only God who heard her prayers knew.

Outside the dock-walls was the great evil, prowling city. Around the docks was a labyrinth of wicked streets, given over to such sins as Susy only vaguely guessed at. At night, when the dock-gates were shut, beasts of prey roamed under cover of the darkness. Murder was not uncommon. Screams and foul oaths and blows and evil language went on all night. A very city of the plains it seemed to Susy; and she was wont to wonder at the clemency of an offended God who did not purge the place with fire.

Within the walls was stillness, save for the lapping of the water. All around stood the big warehouses. In the dock basins loomed here and there a ghostly ship, with only the light of the mast-head alive. Nothing stirred in the darkness, excepting a rat now and again. But, as Susy said, the rats were God's creatures, and incapable of sin, and as compared with the human rats of the sewers outside,

who would count the little beasts anything but comfortable and friendly?

Pat Donovan had been a sailor before ever he became a dock-watchman, and it was an injury to his leg, when a spar came down in a storm, that had made him take to the landsman's life. He had the sailor's simple deftness and craftsmanship, and it was his handiwork about the cottage that drew the directors' benevolent smiles as they went by.

The cottage was crusted with shell-work in many quaint designs. A mosaic of stones and shells made the little garden before the door where nothing tenderer would grow. Sailors coming back from foreign travel would remember Pat's tastes, and bring him a few curiosities in the shape of shells or stones, or a bit of coral or a bird's egg. All was grist to Pat's mill. He had decorated his cottage with the cleverness of the tailor-bird, so that it became quite a feature of the place, and something to be shown to visitors when they were brought round the docks.

Susy's only dread was that some day Pat might be forgotten, and the cottage taken from her. She was as scared of the world outside as a hare. The thought that the day might come when the children would be obliged to enter the world beyond the dock-walls turned her sick with fear.

Susy had come from a mountain glen straight to the dock. Pat had been for giving her her liberty

when he received the injury which crippled him, but then for the first time Susy had become the ardent one, and pleaded for an immediate marriage. The employment at the dock made it easy for them to marry. Susy came to Liverpool, making a terribly adventurous voyage from the quays of Sligo, and they were married at the tiny church in the squalid street close to the dock-gates, where an old, old Italian priest officiated. Except to attend the church and do a little hasty marketing, Susy had never left the dock since that hour.

She was a pretty little woman, big-eyed and brown-skinned, and might have had her choice of husbands since Pat's death, if she would but have looked at the men in anything but a scared way when they began to pay her attentions at all lover-like. Such attentions would be the end of the grateful friendliness which Susy had for every one who was kind to her or the children.

A more worldly-wise woman than Susy might have thought of the advisability of giving the children a stronger pair of arms to work for them than her own. But to Susy the thought of breaking that little sacred circle of herself and the children, with Pat's empty place ever a visible presence, by the intrusion of a stranger, would have been profanation inconceivable.

As it was, they had but just enough to live on.

The four children in the cool dock opening on the river throve as though they were among those mountain glens to which Susy looked back as to Paradise. They were round-limbed, strong, healthy babies, the pure peasant blood showing in their clear skin and rosy cheeks, the clean and innocent life within the dock-walls leaving their eyes without a stain, except the blue of heaven as it is seen in limpid water.

As for the future, well, sure the children were coming on finely. There was little Pat, eight years old, and already employed about the dock on little jobs that befitted his years.

Presently Susy would have to send him to school. She had no hope to escape that; but by taking him to and from the school herself he would escape the perils of the streets. He would be no dunce among his fellows either, for Susy had taught him what of scholarship she herself possessed, and he could read the prayer-book finely, and pick bits of news for his mother out of the Irish newspaper which Susy found the penny to purchase on Sundays at the church-door.

We have all our dreams and our visions, and Susy had hers—as unattainable they seemed as anything could well be.

There was a certain very great man, one John Adair, who was to Susy and her brood as remote and

magnificent—oh, much more remote and magnificent than anybody seems to us sophisticated folk—and yet his name was a household word in the little cottage within the dock-walls.

He was the chairman of the dock company, and a living entity to Susy and her children, whereas the other directors were something abstract and not realized.

Half-a-dozen links had bound the great Mr. Adair to those humble lives, although the gentleman himself had not the remotest idea of it. He was a member of a great English guild which owned half an Irish country-side. He had not thought much of his responsibilities in the matter. Corporations are naturally inhuman. The Irish tenants of the great city company were troublesome folk, for ever complaining of bad seasons and the failure of crops, for ever unreasonably demanding reductions of rent.

Once, when Mr. Adair had had leisure to visit the wild country from which he drew an unimportant amount of his income, he had brought away an impression of beautiful solitudes, air more inspiring than the finest champagne, purple mountains, bog-lands bronze and purple, black mountain lakes, and here and there a white cottage perched amid the boulders.

A clean, honest, industrious folk these tenants of the city company; and John Adair had experienced no such awakening of the conscience as he might

have done if poverty had worn a less winning aspect. He had admired everything he saw, from the mountains to the straight, dignified peasants, and had even been vaguely proud and pleased to find his own remote family connection with the country-side commemorated in the beautiful gorge which was called Glen Adair.

Then he had promptly forgotten all about it. His interests were so inextricably bound up with the country his fathers had adopted that he had forgotten the little drop of Irish blood in his veins, or remembered it only when it was brought to his mind by such an accident as a reminder from a Glen Adair peasant like Pat Donovan, when he required employment at the docks, and applied to the chairman as to a countryman of his own.

Again he had been reminded when poor Pat had walked over the side of the dock, and the matter of allowing his widow and children the use of the house had been mentioned at a board-meeting.

It was Mr. Adair's fiat had settled the matter so far as his fellow-directors were concerned, and the momentary kindness of feeling which had prompted his intervention had not stayed long enough to make any impression on a memory crowded with more important things.

But not so with Susy Donovan. She had heard of that merciful word of the chairman's, careless as

the kind word one throws to a dog, and had repaid it by an intense gratitude and many prayers. She had taught her children to pray for John Adair as the foremost of their benefactors, and when all the dock directors were remembered, his name had a significance and a singleness all its own.

On that little drop of Irish blood wandering among many English in John Adair's veins, his countrywoman had built up something which would have amazed the rich man if he could have known it.

Not only was his careless kindness to the Donovans ascribed to him as something far more deliberate, but he was the corner-stone in that dream-city of Susy's, rosily magnificent as the New Jerusalem heaped of the stormy sunset-clouds in her native country.

Little Pat was grown very knowledgable by this time, and a sharer in all his mother's thoughts—or in nearly all of them.

After the prayers had been said and the children tucked in bed, Pat and his mother, sitting over the embers, were free to build their castles in Spain. Pat was an imaginative child, and liked to evoke many situations in which he should render some enormous service to the great man, such as extinguishing a fire in the docks, or saving him from being "drowned," or murdered, or arresting the flight of his carriage-horses, or something else equally probable.

"Then in coorse," the little castle-builder would go on, "he'd say to me, 'An' what raycompince would ye be after axin', Pat Donovan, for the noble deed ye have performed?' An' I'd up an' say to him, 'Mr. Adair, sir, ye're kindly welcome. More nor that we owe you, sir; but if I might make so bowld as to ax it, send my mother an' me an' the childher back to Glen Adair, an' give us a bit o' land an' a cottage.' An' thin be sure he'd say, 'Pat Donovan, my boy, right you are. 'Tis little enough for savin' me from the ass—assin's knife,' or whatever it might be."

Pat, you see, had profited by the somewhat lurid serial literature of his weekly paper.

Then Susy would smile and sigh as she answered him.

"Sure it would be grand, only my little boy's too little to be doin' them fine things."

"It might be yourself," Pat would say, inventing further. "It might be gettin' hurt in the dock he'd be, somethin' slippin' on his leg most like, an' he havin' to be carried in to you to be minded, and you givin' him the fine nursin' that the doctor 'ud say: 'Mr. Adair, sir, 'tis owin' your life you are to the fine tratement you've had from the woman there.'"

"Sure, I'd like to be doin' it for him, Pat, without raycompince," Susy would say.

And then Pat, who considered himself already quite a man of the world, would assure his mother that a little benefaction like that would be "no more nor a flaybite" to one of Mr. Adair's position, and that it would be "an aise to his mind" to grant it.

And Susy would go off at Pat's request into a detailed description of Glen Adair, though Pat knew every word of it by heart, and had only to look into the embers and shut his eyes in order to see it all.

There never was anything more beautiful in Fairyland than that glen, deep in the mountain-side, lined with silver birches, and alive with thrushes, a thousand little streams clattering and singing down its sides, till they emptied themselves into a little river, golden-brown, clear as amber, stealing amid mossy boulders, foaming to a waterfall on the least provocation, revealing here and there amid the flecks of foam a silver fin going down stream. The singing of thrushes and the singing of streams in the air all day, and nothing more hurtful to soul and body than the black-faced mountain sheep with their frisking lambs. The few habitations among the birches. Far below, in the little town to which the glen made a precipitous descent, the tiny church, whose Angelus bell reminded the Glen dwellers of God three times daily, if they needed such reminder.

After all, when fortune sent Mr. Adair their way,

neither Susy nor Pat was there to render him such service as there was to be rendered.

Terry, a freckled, red-headed, preternaturally clever child was the chosen instrument.

If Terry had had any idea that the shabby, moody-browed gentleman who was working his way to the dock-gates through a thunderstorm was the great Mr. Adair, he had never dared to speak to him. As it was there was nothing in the gentleman's appearance to daunt Terry, who pulled a red forelock and invited him to shelter from the storm.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Adair's carriage and pair were just outside the dock-gates, but instead of hastening to it, he pulled up short, looked at Terry as though he had suddenly been awakened from a dream, and asked him what he wanted with him.

"Sure nothin' at all," said Terry, "barrin' you'd like a sate by the fire till the storm goes over."

Mr. Adair looked up at the sky, then back at Terry, then irresolutely at the little house at the far end of the quaintly-patterned path.

"I hadn't noticed it was thundering," he said, and then he looked back at the great clock over the biggest of the warehouses, and made up his mind that he had a few minutes to spare. Something hungry was in the expression of his eyes as he looked back again at Terry's sharp ruddy face.

"Sure you mustn't have had your wits about you

at all, at all," said Terry. "Glory be to goodness, there's a flash! Come in, and don't be keepin' me houldin' the gate open."

Mr. Adair without another word preceded the queer child to the cottage, the door of which under its grotto-like porch stood invitingly open.

Within a bright little fire burned. Another child sat in a basket-chair placidly nursing a ragged doll. Her cheeks were a hard bright red, like apples that have been polished on the rosy side, and her motherly arms were as fat as arms could well be. Equally well-conditioned were the pair of legs under the short frock.

The visitor looked at her with the same thoughtful, wistful gaze with which he had looked at Terry, and a smile like winter sunshine broke over his dark harassed face. The child was so quaintly serious that one had to smile, no matter how sad one's thoughts might be.

Terry had shut the doors upon the storm, and now handed Mr. Adair a chair, wiping it ostentatiously before doing so, as he had seen his mother do whenever they had had a distinguished visitor, such as a priest or a doctor.

Mr. Adair took the chair, and looked with sudden interest around the little room, which was half-parlour, half-kitchen. Some pots of musk and of scarlet geraniums were side by side behind the white

curtains of the window. The dresser was gay with crockery. On the walls highly-coloured pictures of saints alternated with Irish patriots in the most brilliant clothing. A little garish altar, with artificial flowers in cheap vases, and candles half-burnt through, stood in a corner. Mr. Adair remembered to have seen such things in those tiny white-washed cottages in Glen Adair, long ago.

Terry had meanwhile, while the gentleman was making his observations, taken up his seat on a portion of the other child's stool. Mr. Adair's gaze came back to rest on the couple, and even while he smiled, a curious spasm, as of pain, crossed his face.

"What does your mother feed you on, boy?" he asked abruptly.

"Stirabout, sir, mostly, an' we do have potatoes, an' sometimes, but not often, a bit o' mate."

"Ah! stirabout?—porridge, I suppose you mean?"

"They do call it that here, sir. My mother says they don't rightly know how to make it, not as they do at home."

"At home?"

"In Glen Adair, sir, in the ould country. If ye wor thinkin' of tryin' it, I'd advise you to be atin' it wid salt, not wid them unnatural conthrivances of sugar an' traycle."

"I shall remember," said Mr. Adair seriously. "So you come from Glen Adair in Ireland. Your

name is . . . is . . . ?” He searched in his mind for a name which had slipped out of it long ago.

“Terry Donovan, sir, an’ this is my sister Nora,” answered Terry, with another pull at the ruddy forelock.

“Donovan?—yes, I remember now. So your mother feeds you on . . . on . . . stirabout. Is that what gives you your rosy cheeks, do you suppose, and makes your sister’s legs so fat?”

“Maybe, sir. It’s very wholesome atin’. My mother does be sayin’ that we’d be a dale better at home in Glen Adair.”

“What does the woman want?” asked the visitor with a curious impatience. “Aren’t her children strong enough?”

“Finely, thank you, sir,” replied Terry politely. “’Tis the air she does be talkin’ about, an’ the fields, an’ the mountain lambs, the crathurs, an’ the bits o’ rivers, an’ the trees. I never seen a field meself, nor lambs, nor a tree; but I do be dramin’ about them sometimes.”

“Ah, well! you don’t seem to miss them. You’re a fine strong boy.”

“I get my health very well. ’Tis very healthy here, though there do be fogs. I hope you get yours well, sir?”

The anxiety in Terry’s face as he expressed this hope made Mr. Adair smile again.

"I am very well, thank you, my boy," he said. "I was only thinking of . . . of . . . some one who wasn't. What's that for?" indicating the floating light in a little red lamp on the altar. He had a vague memory of having seen such things somewhere in his travels abroad.

"That's where we do be sayin' our prayers," answered Terry, rather scandalized at such ignorance.

"What do you pray for?"

"Och, a dale o' things." Terry cast about in his mind for something he might reveal to this possibly misunderstanding stranger. "We do pray nearly every night that's in it, that we might be goin' back some day. Don't we, Noreen?" to the taciturn child.

"Back where, boy?"

"To Glen Adair, sir."

"I suppose you would be happier. You could hardly be healthier. How could you get back there?"

Terry forgot to be discreet, the topic was so absorbing.

"I do be lyin' awake at night listenin' to Pat an' my mother talkin' over the fire. Pat—that's my brother, sir; he's workin' in the dock an' earnin' fine wages for a boy of his size—does be thinkin' that if we could do somethin' great for Mr. Adair, that he'd never grudge us a bit of a place over

there, in the glen, an' 'ud maybe be sendin' us back on a ship."

Mr. Adair looked sharply into the speaker's bright eyes. They were limpid as mountain pools, and the face, for all its shrewdness, was innocence itself. He put away the half-formed suspicion before it had taken definite shape.

"What do you know of Mr. Adair?" he asked.

"He's the great gentleman at the head of the docks, sir. Rowlin' in goold he is, I've heerd tell, an' the kind heart wid it." Terry was quoting from his mother. "He stood my poor father's friend, sir, an' only for him we'd be in the streets beyant there now. My mother's terrible afeard o' the streets. I'd often like to be travellin' that way meself, just to be seein' what she's afeard of. She says she'd rather we'd be drowned in the dock too, than be in the same streets. I wonder what they can be like at all, at all?"

"Not as good as Glen Adair"—looking at the sharp, curious little face. "Better keep away from them. So you think this Mr. Adair of yours a very kind person, do you?"

"I'm after tellin' you" answered Terry, slightly offended at what might be the stranger's incredulity. "He's the kindest man walkin' this earth, an' the greatest maybe. I ought to know, for we do be askin' God to reward him every night that's in it."

"Ah, you do that?"

"D'ye see that altar there? An' the candles? We do light them at night when we do be sayin' our prayers. The one in the middle is for him. But sure I do be sayin' to meself whin I hear my mother an' Pat talkin', that 'tis little the likes of us could be doin' for the likes of him, in this world anyway. He'd have all he wanted, wouldn't he, sir?"

"I'd go on praying for him all the same," said Mr. Adair. "There are a great many things a man like him might want, that a little boy like you would know nothing of."

"Maybe," assented Terry, reluctantly. "My mother does be sayin' that I'm too cute for my age, that I'd buy an' sell Pat, an' Pat is ten."

"Ah, well! you are a clever boy, but still you don't know everything."

John Adair was silent for a minute. Then a somewhat shamefaced expression came over his sad, stern, masterful face, and as he leant forward a little, Terry thought that he looked more cheerful. As a matter of fact, a sudden accession of colour came to his pallid cheeks, and he smiled.

"If I were you, my lad," he said, "I'd go on praying for Mr. Adair. A very busy man like that has often forgotten how to pray for himself. Besides—I know something about this Mr. Adair of yours—

he has a little boy, about your age, who is never well. His father gives him everything. His nurseries are as big as one of these docks. He has soft carpets to walk on, and flowers in the winter, and great fires, and nurses to wait on him, and doctors to do all they can for him. He has toys and books by the hundred, but he doesn't care for any of them. His father would give him the heart out of his breast; but it is all the same. This little boy is never well; perhaps he never will be."

The sudden passion of the speech died off abruptly, and Terry gazed in wondering sympathy at the working face.

"That's a bad hearin'," he said, "but sure God can make him strong if the doctors can't; I'll be sayin' a word to my mother, an' we'll put him in our prayers. I'm obliged to you for tellin' me, sir."

"Not at all, my boy," said the visitor, more composedly. "It will be kind to the little boy, and to his father, to pray for him. It can't do any harm anyhow."

The last sentence was addressed to himself, not to Terry. He was half ashamed of himself for the comfort the child's simple talk had given him. He was a reticent man, and had borne the sword in his heart of his only child's delicacy in silence. He had never imagined that it would be a relief to speak of it. Indeed, to a grown-up person it would

have been impossible; but with Terry it was another matter. And those prayers now? John Adair had been brought up in a rigid Low Church atmosphere. The gentle soul who had borne him would have looked on such intercession as that of heathendom. Lighting candles too—what abhorrent mummary it would have been in her eyes! And indeed to her son, who had strayed so far from the faith learnt at her knee, it was a foolish thing.

Withal, it comforted him; and he had a humble feeling that his careless kindness had been disproportionately rewarded. Perhaps he had come to the extremity of snatching at straws for comfort, he had suffered so bitterly and so long in his love for his delicate little son.

His lips moved as though he talked to himself. The storm was over now, but he had forgotten the storm. Terry sat watching him, till he should remember Terry's existence again, with bright eager eyes, too well-mannered to break in on so evident an absorption, though clearly he had something to say.

At last the visitor's thoughts came back to him, and his eyes noted the words on Terry's lips, ready for flight.

"Well?" he asked.

"Why doesn't he—Mr. Adair, sir—I'd be spakin' to him about it if I was you, sir—send the little

boy that's sick to Glen Adair? My mother says it 'ud bring the dead to life, the air of it is that strong and revivin': let alone about them nurseries, sir. 'Twould be terrible lonesome for a little boy, all be himself. 'Tis often I wouldn't be lookin' at my own bit an' sup if I hadn't the company of Nora here to it."

A vision came before John Adair's eyes of the aching loneliness and weariness of the little figure and the peaked little face in those magnificent nurseries; and for a second his eyes were blurred. Then he heard again what Terry was pouring out rapidly.

"An' for toys, sir, would he care to be playin' wid them all his lone? He must be terrible tired of them nurses an' doctors, sir. Little childher, sir, do think a dale o' bein' wid other little childher."

John Adair's eyes dilated, and his lips began to move.

"Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings, dear God! Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings!"

It was wrung from his heart like the cry of one who sees a blinding light. He had not remembered the God of his fathers for many years, or had remembered Him as a vague Power to rail upon, because his Leonard had not been as other children.

As he stood up to go he almost staggered with the new hope that had broken upon him.

"I will come again, my child," he said very gently to Terry. "And I thank you much for the shelter and entertainment you have given me."

"You're kindly welcome, sir," answered Terry politely, preceding him to the door, and down the little path to open the gate for him.

He was too far away to see the great dock-gates roll open before the shabby gentleman, and the carriage, with its champing horses, into which he climbed absently.

Terry, needless to say, retailed the visitor's talk in his mother's ear, that evening, and Susy, sending up a pious thanksgiving, because she had never a moment's anxiety about her fine, healthy children, agreed to a novena for the sick child of the benefactor, and as all the world knows, a novena, piously said, is sure to be efficacious so long as its object is pleasing to Heaven.

She was a little disturbed at hearing how much of their own aspirations Terry had imparted to the visitor, lest Terry should be considered a "terrible bowld little boy," for making so free with the names of great people.

However, these misgivings were forgotten in the great event that came to pass, for not ten days later Susy received a visit from Mr. Adair's man of business, who, with more important things to do at the docks, had the arrangement of the trans-

ference of Pat Donovan's little family to Glen Adair.

So were the wildest fairy-tales come true; and on a day when winter was just giving way to spring, the little family left the dock, where they had been so long sheltered, and took that journey to the isle of their dreams which, after two or three days, brought them to Glen Adair.

Terry had by this time been promoted to a place in the family council, which had come to the conclusion that Terry's visitor that propitious afternoon was some confidential clerk or other who had the ears of the Donovans' great man, for Mr. Adair himself never showed in the matter at all.

So Susy became a working woman in Glen Adair, with one of the spotless cottages for her very own, and a bit of land which Pat would farm presently, and a couple of black mountain cows, and a little flock of sheep and a goat or two.

She had entered into all this as we might into Fairyland, and it was a long time before she could grow used to it, and give up dreaming that she was back in the dock, with those terrible streets waiting outside the gates for the children.

April came, and there were signs of unwonted business, not only among the birds and the streams and the silver birches, but about the shooting-lodge

at the head of the glen which was the landlords' if they chose to use it, though no one had known them to choose within the memory of the oldest inhabitant, and that was Paddy Farrelly, who was a hundred and nine, God bless us !

The place was being cleared up, and re-papered, and smartened in every way, as Susy across the valley could see for herself, and the children for themselves, and then new furniture was put in, and three or four servants came, and the long-cold chimneys began to smoke, which was all sufficiently wonderful, seeing how remote Glen Adair was from the world, and how one reached it amid its encircling hills, much as a fly travels up a wall.

Then one morning there stood in the doorway of Susy's cottage, a tall, stooping, dusty-looking gentleman, who led a little boy by the hand, and the child was pale, as though with much suffering, and wore a warm coat, although the day was so soft.

"I want to see Terry," said the visitor.

Terry came forward, pulling a red curl just as he had done that day at the docks, and he stared at the gentleman, and then at the little boy, who stared back at him with a curious gentle interest.

"Well, Terry," asked the gentleman, "and do you think Glen Adair as fine a place as you used to ?"

"Thank you kindly, yes, sir," said Terry, "and

my mother here," pulling at Susy's skirt, "is obliged to you for sayin' the kind word to Mr. Adair that brought us back."

"I am Mr. Adair," said the visitor, taking the chair Susy had given him, and drawing his tired little boy between his knees.

Well, the end of it was, or rather the happy beginning was, that the sick child began to grow well in the life-giving air, and amid the simple surroundings, and having taken a whimsical fancy to Susy and the little Donovans, was allowed to come and go pretty much as he would. In fact, before the summer was over, the young hospital nurse who had come in charge of the child was permitted to return, and this was hastened by Mr. Adair's coming into Susy's cottage one day, and finding Leonard, who had a headache, resting his head on Susy's breast. Unobserved, he listened a moment or two to the young peasant-woman's crooning to the child.

"I understand now," he said to himself, "what their system of fosterage meant."

So Susy, who could refuse Mr. Adair nothing, was presently put in charge of his child in the shooting-lodge at the head of the glen, and Pat, who was so sensible, took charge of Terry and Nora till such time as Master Leonard should need his nurse no longer. Nor was it a very painful separa-

tion, for the children were much together, the little sensitive heir of the rich man having developed for Terry such an affection as foster-brothers had for each other in the old days, and the affection was fully returned; and as for Susy, she could scarcely tell after a time if she loved her own children or the foster-child best.

So in time Leonard grew quite strong enough for the very easy battle which life promised to be to him.

But Terry had two unspoken regrets. One was that his visitor had not turned out to be a supernatural person, a belief he had cherished in his heart of hearts. It had been St. Patrick for choice. Of course Mr. Adair was nearly as good, but Terry didn't like giving up St. Patrick; and sure the world knew how many a kind turn the saint had done.

The other was that he would never after all see those streets of which his mother had had such a mortal terror. Terry wanted so much to know what it was could make his mother so afraid.

THE WARDROBE

"Is it John Marnane?" asked one of the neighbours, with a jocose air of astonishment; "an' what brings the likes o' you here at all? Thinkin' o' furnishin', John, hey?"

John grinned all over his sunburnt face, uncouth in its stubby beard. Hay-dust was powdered about his old coat, and on his thick hair, hiding the places where it was fast turning grey. His was a grotesque figure; yet under his shaggy brows the blue eyes were mild and innocent, and as he drawled an answer his voice was gentle. At the sound of it his old pony, in a little chaise long innocent of the mop and bucket, lifted its head and whinnied.

"I came where I saw the crowd," John explained. "I thought there must be divarsion goin' on."

"Well, John," said the other, facetiously, "aren't you a great fellow all out for divarsion? Look here, boys," to a crowd of his friends, "here's John Marnane on the look-out for a wife. He's here to buy the furniture. Stand by me, John, an' I'll advise you."

The others gathered round to join in the joke,

and for a few minutes the auctioneer paused with uplifted hammer, and smiled sympathetically. He, too, had known John Marnane from childhood, and enjoyed the friendly badgering he was taking so well. But business cannot long wait on pleasure. The languid bidding was for an old wardrobe, cumbrous and ugly, and as big as the side of a house.

"A pound for this beautiful article, a pound, goin' at a pound, a guinea, one pound half-a-crown, one pound five. Mr. Marnane, allow me to call your attention to this commodious article! It's dirt cheap at the money. You couldn't make a handsomer present to the mistress to hang her dresses in. What did you say, Mr. Marnane? Twenty-seven shillin's?"

He leant over frolicsomenely. The men at John's elbow grinned and encouraged him.

"Come on now, John. Be a man and spake up. There isn't such a chance once in a lifetime."

"Sure you could get herself an' her gewgaws and the girls' frocks an' the boys' shuits 'idin it. 'Tis as big as a Noah's Ark."

"The girls is watchin' you, John. Show them the spunk you've in you."

John, bashfully grinning, wriggled in the hands of his friendly tormentors. As he looked from side to side for a loophole of escape he caught sight of a pretty face dimpling all over with enjoyment of the

joke. It was a rosy face, with little teeth between wide scarlet lips, and roguish eyes under upward-curling black lashes. Something went through John Marnane like an electric shock. For a second it seemed to himself as if he must have trembled in his captors' hands; then he was quiet again, and looking carefully in the opposite direction from the face which had attracted him.

"Now, Mr. Marnane, you've a bidder against you. Twenty-seven shillin's! any advance on twenty-seven shillin's? Did you speak, miss?" to the pretty girl. "Are you hesitatin', Mr. Marnane, an' the eyes of a purty girl leppin' out of her to be the mistress of the wardrobe?"

"Twenty-eight!" said John Marnane.

A roar of delight burst from the crowd.

"Twenty-eight shillin's! Thank you, Mr. Marnane. Any biddin' over twenty-eight? Twenty-eight shillin's for a wardrobe as big as the Great Aistern! Twenty-eight shillin's! Goin', goin', gone! The wardrobe to Mr. Marnane, Johnny."

The auctioneer's clerk made his entry broadly grinning. Every one was grinning except John himself, who had grown deadly serious. One article after another of Father Sheeran's heavy old-fashioned furniture was put up. John kept bidding with steady determination.

The savour went out of the joke by degrees. They had thought they were egging on a man to acquire things he had no use for. Now it would seem that he had come with the deliberate intention of purchasing. Curiosity took the place of laughter on the faces of the crowd; only a few irate matrons who had come bargain-hunting protested they needn't have come there at all, at all, if they had had word that Mr. Marnane wanted everything.

As John pushed his way out of the crowd after the auction was over, Larry Brophy, the man who had first accosted him, took him by the arm.

"Well, aren't you a sly fellow, John," he asked seriously, "to do your coortin' on the quiet, unbeknownst to us all? She's not a girl from these parts, anyhow?"

John looked at him with the gambling excitement of the auction still in his eyes. He seemed quite different somehow from the John Marnane whom it had seemed natural to ridicule earlier in the day. He had the air of a man with responsibilities. The slouch had disappeared from his gait, and he looked taller.

"No," he said, "you don't know her."

"Come up to my place and have a glass of grog, an' tell us all about her. Were you coortin' her in the mother's lifetime? You must have been, you

slly dog, for sure the poor ould woman's only six weeks, come Tuesday, in her grave."

John drew himself gently from the detaining hand.

"I can't talk about it yet, Larry," he said with dignity, "and I can't come up to-night, thank you kindly all the same. I've things to see to at my own place."

"Well, then, if you won't, you won't," said the other, a little offended. "Though, how you can employ yourself of an evenin' in that ould place of yours, wid not a sowl to spake to but ould Margaret Connors, fairly bothers me."

John Marnane went on without a word. If the two men had been together a minute longer, Brophy might have been enlightened. As John was mounting his shabby old car, a little donkey-cart drove out before him into the road. The driver was the pretty girl with the pink cheeks. In the back of the cart she had a few common household utensils she had picked up cheaply. She wore a poor little cotton frock of a pink colour, out of which she looked like a moss rosebud. She sat on a plank laid across the cart, and jogged the donkey along with a loose rein.

At the sight of her something fierce and hungry leaped into John Marnane's quiet eyes. It was there for a second before it was replaced by the

sleepy affectionateness which was his normal expression, like that of a well-treated dog. He waited a minute or two to let the girl go on. Then he followed, making his pony walk, while, with an elaborate pretence, he lighted his old clay pipe.

The girl took the road up the mountain. John followed, driving very slowly and keeping her in sight. He was so engrossed in watching her, that it never occurred to him what people might think, if they met him on a road leading directly away from his own home.

It was hawthorn-time, and the dewy evening was full of fragrance. The wild roses were opening, and a few early meadows were cut. Still the corncrake was sawing monotonously, and the cuckoo was calling close at hand. A little crescent of a new moon in the sky had a faint silver star within its horns.

The girl pulled up at a small thatched cabin by the side of a boreen twisting round the mountain. As she stopped John pulled up his pony. He knew now where the girl lived, and was satisfied. He jogged homewards in the dewy twilight, full of a sweet disturbance such as he had never known in all his fifty years. An unexpected fount of romance, a spring of boyishness in John Marnane's elderly heart had been tapped to-day.

He drove up to his house-front, suddenly aware

of its deficiencies. It was a square, ugly house, such as they build in Ireland. Three windows above, two below, with a hall-door in the middle displaying their uninviting symmetry. The sloping roof was of blue slate; the hall-door had once been painted green, but the paint had come off in flakes, and the knocker was broken. The uncurtained windows were like black patches in the white-washed walls. A broken barrow lay by the hall-door, half hidden among dock and dandelion. The gravel path was covered with coarse grass and rubbish of old iron and broken crockery. In what once had been a flower-bed there was a heap of dry dust; it was the dust-bath of the hens.

John Marnane shook his grizzling head deprecatingly.

"It did me and the old woman, God rest her, well enough, but it won't do for *her* at all, at all."

He put up his pony leisurely, and went in. On the kitchen table a coarse cloth was flung, with a blue crockery mug, a black-handled knife and fork, some salt in an egg-cup, and a jug of buttermilk.

He glanced at these homely preparations for his supper, and around the smoke-browned kitchen, in the bare rafters of which the hens were roosting. A handful of smouldering turf ashes was on the hearth, and from the hook in the black chimney there swung a pot of floury potatoes. There were tins on the

wall, and crockery on the tall dresser, but all were one colour with the smoke. Old Peg sat on her heels by the turf embers cooking a rasher of coarse bacon; a blear-eyed dog wagged his tail feebly as John Marnane came in.

"You're late home," the old woman said querulously. "I hope you're not goin' to take to gad, now herself is gone."

John Marnane stared at her as though he had not heard her. He went through the kitchen into a mean and dirty hall skirting a narrow staircase. He opened the door at the right-hand side and looked in. A musty smell came from the room—an odour of dampness mixed with the all-pervading turf-smoke. The tattered blinds were down, and he could not make out in the dark, the round table, the green rep chairs and couch, the gilt looking-glass, and the coloured religious pictures which were the adornments of the late Mrs. Marnane's best parlour. Still those glories were there hiding in the darkness. John Marnane smiled to himself. The best parlour was not to say a comfortable room, but with her in it things would be different. She was sure to be pleased with the furniture, and the Brussels carpet with roses, and the hearthrug, and the shavings interspersed with silver and gold tinsel in the grate.

He opened the other door with less satisfaction.

There were sacks of potatoes all round the wall, and the only articles of furniture were his mother's shiny old armchair and the tall, ungainly office-desk, with its high stool, at which since his mother died he had laboriously pored over his accounts. He looked around the dusty room. He could have thought that he saw the old mother sitting there, erect in her rusty black, with the nodding purple ribbons and red flowers in her cap. He quailed at the thought. He had been dutifully fond of his mother, and had grieved for her with the forlornness of one from whom after half-a-century's wearing a fetter has been removed. But, good son as he was, he had never entered that room while she sat there without feeling like a truant schoolboy. Why, up to the last day she lived it had been a fiction between them that he had never learnt to smoke!

He struck a match, and lit the tallow candle that was stuck in a bottle on the desk.

"She was a great ould woman," he said to himself, "an' did better by me thin I'd ever ha' done by myself. Still it might ha' been better if she'd given me more of a voice in things. I wouldn't be so terrible helpless an' good for nothin' now."

He went up-stairs, the candle guttering down the bottle on to his hands all the time. A grotesque shadow of himself went after him up the gaunt walls, where the grey plaster had grown grimy. On

the landing he stepped into a hole in the floor. He shook his head gently.

"'Twould be a nasty place for a little soft foot," he muttered. "I'll have in Flynn to see to it."

He went into one of the bedrooms. The tester bedstead, with its torn hangings, stood in the midst of what with its two windows might have been a pleasantly light and airy room. The bed was covered with a tattered patchwork quilt. The bare floor had the grime of ages upon it, and cobwebs hung from window to window. The unpapered walls were covered with stains, and in many places there was the smoke where a candle had been allowed to lean too near, or had toppled over in its primitive candlestick. A couple of cane-bottomed chairs had lost their seats. A painted deal dressing-table was covered with candle-grease and other dirt, and the glass upon it was green in colour and cracked from end to end. John Marnane shook his head more violently than before.

He put down the candle on the chimney-piece, and his eyes half closed, a trick he had acquired in his many moments of lonely reflection. He was remembering a bedroom he had once seen when he had visited a cousin. It had pink roses on a trellis for its wall-paper, and white lace curtains tied with pink bows, and a dressing-table draped with shiny pink calico and lace. He wondered

whether he could imitate that delightful room. In a vision he saw this uninviting bed-chamber so transfigured.

Suddenly a slow, slow blush crept over his face, and he closed his eyes for an instant. For an instant delicious joy tingled in him from head to foot. Then he turned and took up his candle with an innocent shyness at his own barely-formed thoughts.

As he turned away he caught sight of a distorted reflection of himself in the cracked looking-glass. A horrible misgiving smote him. Then he deliberately turned the thing round. If he had been another kind of man he would probably have kicked it to pieces, for it had given him a fright, and he felt a quiver of that mingled rage and fear which is one of the most driving of passions. But as the glass turned away its cracked face he recovered himself with an awkward smile.

"It would make a show of a saint, so it would," he muttered. "I was the quare-lookin' *gom* with them cracks runnin' up an' down my cheeks, for all the world like old sword-cuts. For a minit it staggered me, till it came back upon me that it was th' ould cracks in the glass."

He shook off his fright as one might brush away a troublesome insect, and went down to the kitchen, where he sat cheerfully to his supper.

"Peg," he said, in the course of conversation, "did

you ever hear my mother say rightly what age I was ? ”

“ You’ll be fifty come Michaelmas. You were born a week after my own Bat, Lord rest him.”

“ Would you say, Peggy,” with an air of embarrassment, “ that fifty was what you’d call gettin’ on for a man ? ”

“ *Gettin’ on!* You’ll be gettin’ on whin you’re seventy. What’s puttin’ such notions into your mind ? ”

“ My mother trated me as a child, Peggy, an’ upon my word, I often feel very young. She used to say that a boy was a boy as long as he wasn’t marrid.”

“ The world knows that. People’s marryin’ younger now—the men is, I mane. Why, I remember whin a man didn’t go lookin’ about him till he was gettin’ on for sixty.”

“ I should be young o’ my age, too. I never went drinkin’, nor card-playin’, nor to a wrastlin’ match, nor a cock-fight. The mother wouldn’t have it, as you know, Peg.”

“ She was right. They’re dirty occupations.”

“ You don’t think any one ’ud call me old, Peg ? ” he asked anxiously.

“ What’s come to the man ? If it’s match-makin’ you’re after, you’re the match o’ the youngest girl in the barony.”

John Marnane drew a relieved sigh, and smiled.

"You don't think the young girls falls in love wid their aiquils in age?"

"Falls in love! God forgive you, John Marnane, what would your poor mother say if she heard you? What nonsense is in your head? Girls don't fall in love, at laste if they're what they ought to be. They takes the boy their match is made with, an' thankful. I never knew but one case of what they called 'fallin' in love.' It ended bad."

John Marnane turned away with a sigh from this iron code of manners. He had a sense of his own weakness in desiring that strange foreign commodity known as love, and he was not minded to discover it to Peggy's sharp eyes. He lit his candle and went to bed.

Years of inaction had, perhaps, left him with a surplus of energy. Anyhow, he put his old house into the hands of the painter and paper-hanger in the little country town with amazing rapidity. His investments at the auction were stored in an out-house till the rooms should be ready for them. He displayed a quite unexpected frivolity in the choice of paint and paper. The flowers and the colours were of the gayest. From the mart, as the country town called its big shop, he carried home surreptitiously bundles of flowery chintz and lace curtains, and such fripperies.

It may be supposed that these things made a

nine days' wonder. The doing-up of John's house took time. He chafed in silence over the slowness of the men, but outwardly he was an image of patient contentment. People stopped him in the road to ply him with questions and chaff. He baffled them clumsily but effectually. They approached old Peg whenever they got an opportunity, but she knew as little as they. The work went on. At last the best bedroom was finished, and John, who had carried himself stolidly before the workmen, was at liberty to moon in and out of the room and admire its beauties, beheld of none.

He had made no attempt to see again the girl who had so captivated his fancy. When he had the place ready for her he would ask her. It never occurred to him that she might refuse him. He was a "strong" farmer, far wealthier than people thought him, and she was a poor cottager's daughter. He glowed with delight at the thought of the benefits he would bestow upon her.

At last the workmen were finished. John Marnane was leaning over his gate the same evening, thinking upon how he should approach the girl. Why, he didn't even know her name, and yet his house stood ready for her. He could not much longer restrain the ardour which burned within him. To-morrow he would climb the mountain over there and find her.

As he stood smoking his pipe, to all appearance placidly, Larry Brophy came down the road. The two men nodded.

"When is the haulin' home to be?" asked the new-comer. The curiosity and the jokes were rather stale, and he spoke in a bored voice.

"Very soon now, Larry," announced John Mar-nane, and the other man couldn't tell whether he jested or not.

"The house is finished, I hear. I met Fogarty's men goin' home wid the ladders on a cart."

"It is."

"It'll look well when the sticks is in."

"Well enough," answered the owner, with a secret pride.

"Got the wardrobe in yet, John?"

"Not yet."

"Twill be a terrible job to get it in, and up your stairs. You got it chape, but I don't know that it'll be a bargain after all. You'd better have let it fall to Susy Kavanagh, though where she'd put it bangs me."

John's eyes lit up.

"I don't know Susy Kavanagh," he said slowly.

"Kavanagh's daughter, that lives in the glen above there. They call her the Cluster of Nuts. Where wor your eyes, man, not to see the purty face of her at th' auction?"

"I half disremember," said John, hypocritically. "Was she a stout woman wid a Paisley shawl?"

Larry snorted contemptuously.

"You an' your stout woman! She was a little brown girl, wid a frock the colour of her cheeks, an' roguish eyes. You ould omadaun, not to have noticed the purtiest girl in the country!"

John laughed delightedly.

"Is it an ould bachelor like me?" he asked, expecting a shower of raillery.

"Just as well," went on Larry soberly, "for she was called the third time last Sunday. Young O'Driscoll's her match. There won't be as handsome a pair to dance at the weddin'."

The other man stared at him with eyes that leaped out of his face. A cold sweat gathered upon his forehead, and a mist before his eyes. He felt his knees tremble, and he turned cold with a sensation of physical sickness.

"Well, I must be goin'," said Larry, who had noticed nothing. "Good-evenin' kindly! You'll be sure to ask me to the weddin', John?"

"Oh, aye," said John, mechanically.

He went up-stairs to the best bedroom, and sat down on the bedstead, which had been freshly varnished. He looked round the room stupidly, and the blood seemed to come into his eyes. Then an ache of pity for himself smote him dully. He

had wanted a thing for the first and only time in his life, and he had been disappointed. He knew that there would be no spring in him to make him begin anew. His eyes filled with tears, and he began to cry. Again and again, like a great loutish boy, he wiped away the tears with the dirty sleeve of his coat, till he looked more than ever a pitiable object.

It was long before the fountain of his tears was dried. Then at last he lifted his head, and gazed with inflamed eyes at a patch of moonlight on the floor. He spoke out his latest thought in words.

"I'm thinkin'," he said, "that I might as well break up the ould wardrobe wid a hammer."

A CHILDLESS WOMAN

OUTSIDE the rain fell in steady grey sheets. The sodden fields smoked with rain, and the filth in the cattle-yard upon which the window looked was momentarily increasing its liquid depth. Nothing could well be more melancholy than the view through the dirty window-panes. The hens in the barn talked disconsolately about the weather in their inimitable voices of complaint. Else the world was silent, except for the streaming of the rain.

Within one sound dominated the silence and the talk alike. It was the laboured breathing of John Flaherty, who was come to his last days. His old mother, in an immense frilled cap and a discoloured black dress, sat by the embers of a fire stirring something in a saucepan. One hand held the great brown beads of a rosary.

The room was grimy and squalid, and it was no wonder the dying man fought for breath, for the air was jealously excluded. The bare boards of the floor had gone long unscrubbed. The bedclothes were grey with dirt. A candle in a bottle on the mantelshelf had guttered down the sides of the

improvised candlestick, fastening it firmly in its place. Candle-grease was everywhere, spattered or thickly accumulated. One or two strips of paper peeled forlornly from the damp walls. The black horsehair chairs protruded their stuffing. The whole room was mean, unlovely, unclean, beyond description.

Mr. Dempsey, the lawyer, sipped at his grog while he arranged his papers. He believed in a little whisky when he was performing these death-bed duties of his. If it was not a disinfectant, at all events it enabled him better to bear the atmosphere of such sick-rooms as this. His clients very often had a conviction that making their wills meant hastening their ends, and so only sent for the lawyer with the priest.

For a few seconds there was no sound in the room, except the scratching of the lawyer's quill and the broken-winded breathing of the sick man.

"All the interest of which I die possessed in the farms of Drumroe, Lisnarea, and Lisdonnel I give and bequeath to my brother Patrick Flaherty. To the same Patrick Flaherty I give and bequeath five thousand pounds in Consols."

Then followed a list of investments which surprised Mr. Dempsey. He had known John Flaherty to be "comfortable," but had not known how near he came to being wealthy. True, he and his old mother, and Poll his wife, had toiled like the beasts of the field,

rising early, lying down late, leading a life stripped of the commonest decencies of life, the ordinary human pleasures. Still, that the dolorous scraping and toiling should have resulted so richly, amazed the lawyer, accustomed as he was to snug accounts in the savings banks.

His pen scratched along, resolving the wishes of the testator into legal phraseology; but suddenly, midway in the investments, he stopped and stared at John Flaherty.

"Do you know," he asked, "that you are practically leaving your brother residuary legatee?"

"I don't . . . know . . . what that manes, Mr. Dempsey . . ."—John Flaherty's breath was harder to get every minute—"but . . . if it manes . . . Patrick is to have all I've got . . . that's what *I* mane."

"But your wife, man?"

From where he had been sitting the lawyer had noticed Poll Flaherty going to and fro in the mire of the cattle-yard, an unlovely, unfeminine figure in her brogues, her petticoats dirty and dripping, the sack upon her shoulders, the torn man's hat pulled down on her pale dull wisp of hair. She was carrying fodder to the cattle on a fork across her shoulder, as a man would carry it, apparently quite oblivious of the drenching rain or the horrible slush through which she waded.

Something patient and lonely about the plodding figure stirred a vague indignation in the lawyer's heart.

"But your wife, man?" he repeated.

"Give her . . . the fifty pounds . . . she brought me. . . . There was a feather bed . . . and some cocks and hens . . . and a pot . . . but sure she had the use of them while they were in it. . . . Let her have her fifty pounds."

The lawyer turned a little red. A thought of his black-eyed Nora at home—"the best wife and mother between the four seas of Ireland," he was wont to say—moved him to do battle for this sorrowful specimen of womanhood.

"It is not a just will, Mr. Flaherty," he said sharply. "If you persist in making it, the Courts will in all probability break it."

"Don't be annoyin' the man, an' he on his death-bed," put in the querulous voice of the crone by the fire. "Never heed him, John, acushla; they can't break the will. Sure they couldn't say Pat was next or nigh the place to use an undue influence on you. He's keepin' out of it on purpose."

The lawyer turned his sharp, clever face her way.

"I should expect you, Mrs. Flaherty, to be the first to dissuade your son from making this unjust will."

"You'd be expectin' more nor you'd get," was the answer in a malignant voice.

The lawyer thought he saw his way to a triumphant rejoinder.

"The will makes no provision for you," he said shortly.

"D'ye think I'd take it from him? Is it to lessen Pat's share an' the childher's? Pat 'll see to me; but if he doesn't, I'll earn my bit. Go on with the will, Mr. Dempsey. The poor sowl hasn't so much time to spare."

"I can refuse to draw the will. I don't believe such a will would stand an instant if that poor creature out there took the trouble to break it. What, in heaven's name, has she done to deserve treatment like this?"

"She was . . . never any good," said John Flaherty, his words slower, heavier, like the ticking of a clock when it is about to stop.

"She worked for you early and late. It was the talk of the country-side; though they're not too particular," said the lawyer bitterly.

"Let the man die aisy," put in the crone again. "The woman was no good. She never had a child. Pat's wife gev him the house full o' them."

"You're not alleging that against her as a crime, Mrs. Flaherty?"

"What else? Marriages should be bruk when women has no childher. She was a terrible disappointment, so she was, to the man that's lyin' there."

"God help her!" said the lawyer abruptly. "So you mean to leave away from your wife, Mr. Flaherty, the fortune she helped to make?"

"Let Pat's lads have the spendin' of it. . . . He'll send them . . . to college, an' make . . . gentlemen of them. I don't . . . grudge them their . . . fling of it."

"Poll was never for work," said the old woman, lighting up at her son's speech. "She had to be broke to it. She thought when she married John that she was goin' to have the life of a lady; nothin' but sittin' about an' divartin' herself. She thought terrible hard of it when she found she had me over her to make her put her hand to the work."

Again the woman's figure, marred of its natural comeliness, passed before the lawyer's eyes, the bundle of wet fodder over one shoulder.

"You did your work very thoroughly, Mrs. Flaherty," he said, grimly.

"I did, but I had somethin' to do before I broke her spirit. The old granny that rared her had given her a grand consate of herself. She was terrible impident, though she was only a slip of seventeen. I made her that afraid o' me in time that she'd run into a mouse-hole out o' the way o' my tongue."

"She was . . . very saucy," creaked the slackening wheels of life in the bed.

"She was fool enough to think that John there

'ud take her part agin me. When she found out how wrong she was there, she gev up. There was no more impidence in her from that day forward, an' I'll not deny she worked. Och ! she worked like a masheen after a time, but it was no thanks to her for it."

The lawyer turned his back upon the speaker abruptly.

"You practically leave your wife destitute, Mr. Flaherty," he said. "She can't live on fifty pounds."

"She can . . . go to sarvice," said John Flaherty.

"She has nayther chick nor child to keep," said his mother ; "let her work for herself."

The lawyer made a movement as though to take up his gloves. Then he drew back. He would be only putting business into the hands of Terence Byrne, the rival attorney, and out of his own.

"Very well, Mr. Flaherty," he said. "I have made my protest. I shall draw the will for you, only warning you that if your wife disputes it, it will certainly be broken."

"Poll 'ud never do it," said John Flaherty.

"She wouldn't have the sperit for it," said the mother. "I think John's dalin' wid her rale handsome, lavin' her the fortune. Hasn't he had the keep of her all these years, an' she a childless woman ?"

"You put your cross here, Mr. Flaherty," said the

lawyer, guiding the faltering hand to make the rough sign that set the seal on the last act of injustice.

As he laid down the squalid form, his eye fell again on the figure of Poll Flaherty.

She was resting herself an instant by the door of the cattle-shed, and her eyes looked up to the window of the sick-room from which she was excluded. Mr. Dempsey had good sight. He saw the rough, weather-beaten, plain face suddenly contorted. A fold of the dripping unclean skirt was raised to wipe away a tear.

PINCH AND THE POORHOUSE

THE cabin was empty, except for a couple of wooden stools and a straw shake-down in the corner. The May sunshine came brilliantly through the open door. Outside was a triangular grass-plot, the corners pointing each to a grassy lane. A thorn-tree in full flower was in the midst of the grass-plot, and below it was a holy well, hooded in stone. A few rags on the thorn-tree spoke of the water's powers of healing. It was a pleasant spot.

"There was always somethin' goin' on," said its owner, "some wan passin' by, if it was only a child ladin' a goat."

He sat now on one of the stools, and looked regretfully at his lost kingdom. He was a simple-faced old man, with a much younger expression than the urchin who confronted him on another stool, and who was engaged with much gusto in making a meal of a raw onion and dry bread. There was a dog also present—a grey, wire-haired terrier, who lay in the sun and blinked in lazy comfort.

"You'll change your mind, Misther Bryan," said the urchin, "an' ate a taste wid me?"

"I haven't the desire, Owney boy, an' 'tis well I haven't. The young should ate hearty, an' you've little enough there for yourself."

"You're kindly welcome, all the same, Misther Bryan."

He was a shock-headed urchin, with a pale, peaked face under his close thatch of red hair. He had a club-foot, which kept him from joining the games of the other boys, and he was sensitive on the score of it. No doubt that explained the queer friendship between him and old Johnny Bryan. The two were without kith and kin also, and in their loneliness they were glad of each other.

"They say," said the lad, looking sideways from his bread and onion, "that there's the finest of atin' an' drinkin' in the place you're going to—mate every day, lashin's an' lavin's of it, an' porther an' whisky (if the doctor'ordhers it)—everything, except tobacky, that you could want."

The old man sighed heavily.

"There's many a thing I'll want. I'll want the tree out there, an' the well an' the mountains, an' the birds, an' the pleasant word wid them that passes up an' down. Why, look here, Owney! 'twas never lonely wid the door open there, an' you never knowin' when a foot 'ud come by. I'm glad you're to have it, Owney, but I'll want to see it sore in the place I'm goin' to. None of my name ever went

210 PINCH AND THE POORHOUSE

there before me, an' it's bitter hard, for I gev the labour o' my youth to the country that gives me only the House for my old age."

He looked down at his hands, swollen and deformed with rheumatism, and sighed again. The boy looked at him with a tentative air.

"We might go on as we're goin', Misther Bryan—you wid the house, and me wid frightenin' the crows. 'Tis your house that's in it, and 'tis fair I should take my part; sixpence a day's not much, but we might live on it. You've a aisy mouth to fill, Misther Bryan, and then maybe you'd get the relief afther all."

"It wouldn't do, Owney," said the old fellow sadly. "Sixpence a day is little enough to live on yourself, and spare a crust for Pinch. You won't let Pinch want, Owney?"

"No fear; me an' Pinch 'll fare alike. Look at him now, the ould villyin of the world, waggin' his tail as if he understood. He'll fret afther you, Misther Bryan."

"Not for long, Owney. Now his father, ould Pinch, 'ud have broken his heart. He was the faithfulest dog I ever knew. Not but what young Pinch is the very moral of him. But he's young, an' th' affections are not set in him. Besides, he's fond of you, Owney boy, an' it's more natural for him to belong to you. Young dogs is terrible fond of

divarsion. I dare say he thinks me an ould slow-coach, eh, Pinch?"

The dog had stood up on hearing himself discussed, and had gravely put his head on his old master's knee.

"He won't get much divarsion out o' me," said Owney, looking down at his club-foot; "there's nayther tatterin' nor tearin' in me like other boys o' my age; but I'll be kind to Pinch, never fear."

"He comes of a great ould stock, Owney. His mother was of the stock o' Rattler, his father had the blood o' Finn MacCool and Dublin Boy. Many was th' offer I refused for ould Pinch, and I'll go bail himself here is worth a hatful o' money. I wouldn't be surprised now if he was worth five good guineas."

"Sound man, Pinch!" said the boy admiringly.

"'Tis not to every gorsoon I'd tell it, afeard he'd be for turnin' the poor baste into money. But I don't think it o' you, Owney agra."

"You needn't, Misther Bryan. Five guineas is a power o' money to be inside a dog's skin, but I'll keep it by me, Misther Bryan. I've a fancy for Pinch. Other dogs is too fond o' barkin' at me. They don't like the quare foot of me."

There was the sound of a steam-whistle in the distance.

"One o'clock!" said the old fellow. "It's time

to be off, Owney boy. Well, I'll be on the road before you get home. You'll take Pinch wid you, an' I'll lock the door an' lave the kay under the stone. I'll wait for the cool o' the evenin' before I ramble off."

The boy turned round from the door with anxiety on his expressive face.

"You're sure it's right about the little house, Misther Bryan?"

"It's all right, my son. Father Keogh drew up the paper for me, an' there's no gettin' out of it. No wan could meddle wid you, barrin' myself, an' no one's likely to thry, for there's none o' my name livin'. Listen, Owney dear, before you go. You're sure you tould no wan?"

"Unless the crows. They're the only people I've a chance of spakin' to from mornin' till night."

"I'd like it to be a saycret till I go. I'd be sorry to have to say good-bye to any wan, an' I on my way to the poorhouse."

"Well, good-bye, Misther Bryan. I'll be in the first visitin' day to see you. Keep up your heart, man. I'm tould it's a rale elegant place."

He went off with a rather unwilling dog at his heels, and the old man, after watching the pair out of sight, re-entered the cottage. He resumed his seat on the stool, and mused with his head on his breast while the hours of the afternoon passed by

He had tried everything before he had come to entering the poorhouse. He had dragged himself on his poor twisted, rheumatic limbs to one farmer after another for whom he had worked formerly. But there was no place for him. He was as useless as a log, and an eyesore in any farm-yard; so, when his last chance had failed, he had made over to the boy the little cabin which had been his and his father's before him, and made up his mind to enter the "House." He had a queer pleasure in his gift to Owney.

"'Tis a quiet sort o' place, Owney dear," he had said, "where you may be alone the len'th of a summer's day, an' if there's company about you don't want, sure you've only to lock your door an' put the key in your pocket, an' there you are."

"True for you, Misther Bryan," said Owney, "an' I'm not denyin' that I'll be as happy as a king wid a little house to meself. I was always bothered afeard I'd have to go back to the village, weary on it!"

When Owney came home in the cool of the evening the house was empty. Pinch went about restlessly, whining and sniffing, while his new master sat on a stool regarding him with a melancholy look. After a time Owney made his fire of twigs and boiled some water for his tea, and after a frugal meal honestly shared with Pinch, the two

went to bed together. It was lonely in the little cabin at night without old Bryan.

A couple of days later the old man was creeping about in the sunny courtyard of the Union. A few other helpless old people crawled up and down in the sun. They had made friendly advances to him, but as yet he had not responded. He was too sick at heart with the degradation which had come upon him.

He thought of his little cabin in a misty way. He could see it there in the sun with the white butterflies flitting about the doorway, and the daisies in the grass, and the well-water so cool and dark. The sunshine would be streaming in at the little window and climbing the wall by his bed. Owney and Pinch would be in Farmer O'Reilly's ten-acres scaring the crows, and under them the wide, free country, and in the distance the hills. The tears came thickly into the old fellow's bleared eyes. If only he might be there once more, a free man and self-respecting!

There was a good deal of traffic through the courtyard. Tradesmen's carts drove in, and ladies on their way to visit the sick in the hospital passed by, and well-dressed people with business at the master's house or the clerk's office. That was the master himself going about so busily—a young, sprucely-dressed man, florid and pleasant-looking.

Able-bodied paupers trailed about to and from

the various workshops. Old Bryan wondered what kept them there. He had no idea of the pauper taint in the blood which makes the workhouse home. He expressed his wonder to another old man who sat on a bench tapping the ground with his crutch.

"A many o' them were born in it," he replied, "an' more was brought up in it. I can see it's bitter to you, dacint man, as it was to me till I got used to it. But man, woman, or child, brought up to it, they never want to get out of it."

A sturdy fellow went by with a coffin on his shoulder. Old Bryan looked after him half-enviously. He would not be sorry to exchange whatever days of shameful ease were left to him for a resting-place in that narrow house.

The old fellow who had spoken to him nudged him again.

"Sit by me, good man," he said, "an' I'll read you what's on the paper."

He had taken a newspaper from his pocket, and was unfolding it with pride. It was a fortnight old, but that did not make its contents less precious.

At that moment a little grey dog, dusty and footsore, limped in at the gate behind a butcher's cart. He ran here and there about the courtyard with his sharp little nose to the ground, and presently he gave a yelp of joy. The scent led him straight to

216 PINCH AND THE POORHOUSE

the bench on which old Bryan sat blinking in the sun. He sprang on to the old man's knee and began licking his face furiously, his whole little body trembling with excitement.

"Why, Pinch, Pinch!" cried the old fellow. "Where did you come from at all, you little rogue? An' the tracks o' me two days ould!"

The dog and the man were still hugging each other when the workhouse-master came that way.

"What's this?" he asked quickly. "Where does the dog come from?"

Old Bryan stood up and touched his cap humbly.

"If you plase, sir, 'tis a little bit of a pup I rared meself. I never thought the crature 'ud have the wit to find me, nor the heart to follow me. I'm sure I beg your pardon, sir; the dog doesn't know it isn't a place for his sort. If you'd let him stay a day or two, sir, there's a boy that's a good master to him 'ull be comin' after him."

He was holding Pinch in his arms, and looking at the master with an appeal which went to the kindly heart of the man.

"H'm!" he said, putting a finger under Pinch's grey-bearded chin. "He looks a well-bred one!"

Pinch wriggled round his little head and licked the master's hand.

"You see he knows I like dogs," the master said,

looking pleased. "Where did you get him, my friend?"

"I had his father before him, sir. He comes of a fine ould, ancient family—rale blood-stock, sir. If ye take an intherest in Irish terriers I could rattle over his pedigree for you, sir."

"Well, my man, were you thinking of keeping the dog with you?"

"I never thought 'twould be allowed, sir," said old Bryan with an eager flush. Then his face fell. "An' perhaps 'twould be unnatural, too, to keep a lively young crathur like him shut up between walls."

"Never mind that, my friend," said the master, smiling. "He looks as if he'd be very happy with you. I'm sure if you asked him he'd say he'd like to stay. He's a good ratter, eh?"

"The best from here to Cape Clear."

"I thought so. Well, I don't think the ratepayers would object. The place is getting overrun with rats. Keep him from killing the cats—that's all."

The whole world had changed for old Bryan. Why, with Pinch for a companion, even the work-house would be home-like. The only thing was his scruple about keeping Pinch with him.

"Well," he said at last, "I'll give him his choice when the boy comes. If he chooses Owney, Owney let it be. I can't say fairer nor that."

Owney came a few days later, looking paler than

ever from his grief and anxiety about Pinch. When he found that the dog was safe, his relief was great. Pinch received him affably, but there was evidently a great distinction in his mind between the boy and his old master.

"Don't be talkin' of chices, Misther Bryan," said Owney, looking hungrily at Pinch. "He med his chice when he followed you. He'd have bruk his heart wid me. An' besides"—with an affectation of lightness—"I don't care about Pinch. I'm goin' to get a little cat o' me own. I'm all as wan as promised her. She's a blind-eyed little cat wid a quare foot like meself. Now, look here, Misther Bryan, that dog's a dale better off for divarsion here thin wid me. What's flyin' after crows to a dog of his breed?"

"'Deed then I believe you," said old Bryan. "'Tis wondherful how he's made himself at home. Every wan's so civil-spoken to him, from the master down to the littlest child in the House. 'Tis surprisin' how much good-nature is in the crathurs. An' the cats even lets on to be frightened of him, an' pelts up a three to give him a scamander after them. An' look here, Owney boy, as a rattin' dog he is unsurpassed. It 'ud break the heart of a cat wid any spirit in her to see the execution he does."

"You'll be feelin' yourself at home, now you've Pinch, Misther Bryan?"

“ Well, I’m resigned, Owney. But whin I go—it isn’t likely I’d last out a young dog like Pinch—I’d like you to take him out of it. I wouldn’t like Pinch to be a poorhouse dog. D’ye know, Owney, I’m a bit surprised at him makin’ himself so much at home—so I am, Pinch!” stroking the dog’s little hard-head. “’Tis different wid them that has to come here agin their will. But I never thought wan of your breedin’ ’ud take kindly to the poorhouse.”`

THE FRENCH WIFE

SQUIRE BARNARD, of Castle Barnard, was a man filled with the fulness of life. He looked around upon his castle and his pastures, his park-land and his plough-land, and had no more thought to his latter end than the man in the Scriptures. He had an ancient house, from the windows of which he surveyed three counties, and which had been his father's before him, and would be his son's after him. He had the land-hunger and the house-hunger for his own possessions. He was incredibly proud, under his rough exterior, of his name and his race. He was a red-faced, blustering, overbearing man; handsome, if you like the sort—blue-eyed, red-haired, white-toothed. His friends said that his heart was as sound as a nut; others, and these with no cause of disaffection towards him, held him a man whose will was born to over-ride the wills and the rights of the weak. His dogs and his horses knew the lash of his whip, but loved him withal. His servants held him honest, although his face in the stable-yard and the cattle-byre was as good as a high wind.

There was one he was never rough with—his French wife. She was little, and merry as a squirrel, with bright, dancing brown eyes, and a pretty manner of appeal that went to one's heart. She hung on Squire Barnard's life like a rose on his coat. She was always prattling to him, or nestling by him with her little brown hand in his great paw, or perched on his chair-arm whispering in his ear some innocent jest, at which he would shout his big laugh and swear that there was never such a girl.

She was more babyish and more witching than her two boys—solemn, serious-eyed, brown-skinned children, beautiful in roundness and health. Those boys were the crown of Squire Barnard's pride. They were called Pierre and Antoine—Peter and Antony, the squire said, were names good enough for him. He had them riding their ponies before they were three years of age, and he was as proud of their pluck as he was of their health and beauty.

He had found his French wife abroad—no one quite knew where. It was certain that she seemed to have no relatives; at least, no one out of France ever came to visit her. There was a rumour that Squire Barnard had eloped with her—a foolish rumour perhaps; but Nelly Egan, a housemaid at Castle Barnard, swore to the conversation she had heard one morning when she was dusting the inner

library, and the squire and his wife in the outer had not seen or heard her presence, because of the heavy curtains drawn across the arch between.

The squire was at his papers, his lady as usual seated on the arm of his chair. For a miracle, she was silent, and after a time the squire seemed to notice so unusual a happening, for Nelly heard him say :

"What, my chicken, silent so long ! I shall think thy music is out of season with the blackbird's and the lark's."

She answered nothing, and then, according to Nelly, who must have had her eye between the curtains, he swung her on to his knee, and laid her down on his shoulder as if she were a bit of a child. Then he swore a great oath, which Nelly was too good a Presbyterian to record, that he would have no tears ; yet, for all that, he pulled out his big bandanna, and mopped away at the French wife's eyes affectionately.

"It is the birthday of my mother, Robert," she said, in broken English that fell from her lips as prettily as the drops of water from a fountain.

"And what then ? I have a birthday in a week from now ; and whatever thou askest of me I shall give thee. Is that enough, child ?"

He gathered her up closer in his arms, and held her against his rough cheek.

"I would go into France, if I might, and pray my mother's pardon. She is old, and I left her without a word. What would we do, thou and I, if some day our sons should do the like?"

"Thy lady-mother would have none of me," the squire said, with a tremble of anger in his voice, "because I prayed as my fathers had prayed before me. Why dost thou think of her? Hast thou not me?"

"Yes, yes, Robert," answered the French wife timidly, and lifting a hand to stroke his cheek. "I ought not to weep, having so dear a husband."

"And thy lads, thy gift to me. Come to the terrace to see them. Antony is playing with his ball, and Peter, when I last saw him, was setting his pony to jump the sunk fence."

"Oh, my boy," cried the French wife, getting up and running fast to the door. "He will kill himself! Why dost thou not bid him, Robert, that he should be careful?"

"Nay," said the squire, following and detaining her, "I will not have my boys taught fear. I would rather see them dead than afraid. I will let thee go when thou hast gained courage."

The French wife, indeed, was fluttering in his grasp like a snared bird, and turning great eyes of appeal upon him; but though he caught her in his arms and held her close, he was merciless to her.

Only when she had promised him not to frighten the boy, did he let her go, and then he went with her.

It was Nelly, again, who heard this scrap of conversation between them when she ought to have been minding her own business. The squire had been away, and on his return had brought his wife a barbaric piece of jewellery. It was his custom to load her with gems and gold. She was thanking him, with her heart in her eyes, and the children were rolling together with the dogs on the hearth-rug. His glance fell upon them, and pride leaped into his eyes.

"Thou hast given me the boys," he said, pointing at them. "I have a right to love thee."

"Thou wouldst love me without the boys, Robert?" she asked with alarm.

"I don't know that I could love a childless woman, even thee. What would become of the land, then? Be content, my pretty. Thou art the mother of brave sons, and I adore thee."

Not so long after this, as time goes, Squire Barnard and his cousin James met over a card-table. The two men hated each other, and both were inflamed by drink. Squire Barnard was the loser, and was savage. Insult after insult he flung into his cousin's pale sneering face, which had a look of triumphant malice that almost maddened him. His

ill-luck continued, and he grew wilder and more savage. He played his cards amid a shower of oaths, and his insults to the man opposite him increased, so that James Barnard's veins swelled in his forehead, his lips worked, and into his little grey eyes there came a greenish light, like that in the eyes of a beast when he is about to spring.

"I can bear with thee, Cousin Robert," he said at last, with icy deliberation, and tasting the words as though they were delicious. "One day thou wilt come to an end of thy passions by a fit, and Castle Barnard will be mine, and thou wilt be forgotten."

"Thine, thou devil!" shouted Squire Barnard, his eyes starting from their sockets. "And what of my bonny lads?"

James Barnard hissed a word between his teeth, at which the other man fell back and panted hard. For a moment he looked as dazed as the bull in the arena when he has lost much blood and feels the sharp stab of the spear. Then, with an infuriated roar, he sprang at his enemy.

If he had once caught him by the throat, James Barnard would have had small chance of ever succeeding to Castle Barnard, but by this time the fine gentlemen who had been watching the scene with lazy amusement thought it time to interpose, and he was caught by a dozen strong hands and dragged backward out of the room. Robert Barnard remem-

bered no more till he awoke some hours later, and found Dr. Holmes bending above him.

"Too choleric, my friend," said the physician. "You must learn to keep quiet. This time I have averted a fit by bleeding, but next time—I am not sure how next time will go."

"You heard what he said, doctor?" asked Robert Barnard. The doctor nodded his head gravely.

"I heard it. It may be malice. He has set it afloat that Armstrong the counsellor tells him that the marriage is nothing in law, and the children cannot succeed. It is not that madame is a Papist, though there is some such law on the statute-book. We might look for that to be repealed in time. But it is something of the French law, something about the permission of the parents. It would be strange if such a thing should unmake a lawful marriage, but the fellow seems sure."

"I will go to Armstrong and ask," said the squire, stretching his great hairy arms for his clothes. He was still pale from the shock as much as from the recent bleeding.

The doctor said nothing. He was too wise a man to try to keep the squire against his will, and he felt that the suspense was more killing to the man than any foolhardiness could be.

An hour later Squire Barnard staggered out of Armstrong's office with a face like a ghost. He

flung himself into the saddle and turned for home. As he went his horse's hoofs made the sparks fly out of the stones; and as he dashed up the street, frightening children and upsetting barrows—for it was fair-day—a shower of curses followed him.

A couple of miles from home the way led him past the Inch Farm. Susan McElligott, his tenant's daughter, was grinding flour at a quern. Mechanically the squire's eyes fell upon her. She was as tall as himself, and splendidly built. Her bare arms shone like rosy marble. Below the opening of her bodice at the neck her full bosom rose and fell. Her red hair was red-gold in the sun, and her downy skin was faintly bedewed with perspiration. The squire looked at her, and then trembled all over with a violent impulse.

"If I took her to church," he muttered in his beard, "she would give me sons, and James Barnard would never rule in my stead."

He flung himself from his horse, and marched up to the astonished girl.

"Will you take me for your husband?" he asked.

The girl's eyes, blue as sapphires, narrowed themselves between the red gold lashes.

"What, Squire Barnard, is it to marry a man already married?"

"Married? Not I, my girl. They can outwit a man with their accursed French laws, no matter

how honest he be. I am no more married than you."

"But madame?"

The squire blenched. "Do not speak of her. I am not married. Is not that enough?"

The girl dropped her quern.

"Come to my father and say to him what you have said to me. If you are not mad, I will give you your answer."

Between Andrew McElligott and the squire it was settled, and within a very short space of time the two stood up before the minister in a neighbouring county and were made man and wife.

Squire Barnard returned to Castle Barnard as meek as a whipped dog, and like the ghost of his strong triumphant self. The French wife and her boys were gone—Armstrong the counsellor had arranged all that—and Susan McElligott reigned in her stead, and ruled Castle Barnard with the cruelty and the caprice of a tyrant who has been born a slave.

The French wife went no further than Ballymolena, the county town, not distant five miles from the gates of Castle Barnard. There she crept with her two lads into the pretty cottage the squire had provided for her—too stunned, it would seem, to refuse the bread from his hands.

But she had not been a year abandoned when the

diphtheria seized on the beautiful round children. They said she stood over them when they were dying, dry-eyed, and even praised the Lord aloud that He had snatched the innocent from shame.

When Robert Barnard heard they were dying, he came creeping to her door-post praying that he might see them; but she shut the door in his face. God had put a new spirit into the French wife.

When the little ones were laid side by side under the shamrock sod of Ballymolena grave-yard, she turned her back on the cottage, and took up her abode some distance away. After that she accepted no more of Robert Barnard's charity. She offered herself to teach music and French to the children of gentlefolk in those parts, and, Papist though she was, feeling ran so high in her favour that she had more pupils than she could well handle.

But the night the children died Susan McElligott, as she was always called in those parts, was delivered of a dead son.

It was but the beginning of Robert Barnard's punishment. Child upon child came into the world dead, or lived a few days before its tiny breath flickered out. For long the nursery was silent, and the dust gathered thickly on the toy soldiers and the rocking-horses that had belonged to the children of the French wife. The last child Susan McElligott

bore him, a boy, lived. But alas ! as he grew up to manhood a want in his mind revealed itself. He was quite gentle and intelligent about many things, but something had been left out of his mind at the making, something that would have enabled him to take his place among other men, and so carry on the business of this world. He inherited from his father, curiously enough, the love of the land, and it was his harmless delight to spend days measuring it with instruments, and afterwards making coloured maps of it. At the school-houses of the district he would come begging an urchin to carry his strange tools for him over miles of bogs and mountains.

He was the last of the Barnards of Castle Barnard.

HUNTING-CAP

OLD HUNTING-CAP, as they called him, sat under his tree, and looked down on a fairyland of wood and lake and mountain—his, in the vanity of man, who endures but for a breath. He was very old; and his thoughts were the slow thoughts of old age, creeping laboriously back over the years and days of glorious life when he was a man, and not a bundle of pains and wearinesses. Every bone of him ached for the bed over yonder among the heather and furze of the Brown Hill, on the hill-top whence you could see four counties. There he had appointed to be buried; and there Campaigner, the horse who had carried him many a glorious day, lay awaiting him. Campaigner had died, worn out at forty-three, and his grave had been dug at the foot of his master's. Within reach of where the master's stiff right hand should lie was the little grave of Mousquetaire, the Spitz that had belonged to the gentle lady who was to have been Old Hunting-Cap's wife. But Mousquetaire had died so long ago that the slender bones of him must have long crumbled away to dust; and why was Old

Hunting-Cap still lingering on in a land where no one wanted him, and where he dwelt among ghosts and shadows?

He was Sir Jocelyn to his face; always behind his back Old Hunting-Cap, because he wore a brown and frayed hunting-cap of velvet on his few silver hairs. The world he dwelt in was a world of strangers. It was not only that he had outlived all the men and women of his day, but the children had grown up to look at him with an altered face. The people of old had been fond of him, had been ready to defend him with their lives against process-servers and bailiffs. They had shared his plenty, and amid the racketing and jaunting and jollity and good-will they had lived like a large family, of which he was the irresponsible king and chief. Now wherever he went he met cold faces and the eyes of enemies. It made him feel strangely old and cold and deserted. They had all gone away together, the dead, the loving and friendly of old; and he was like a sheep lost on the mountains in the drifts of winter.

He was so old that he had let the reins slip from his fingers, and things had been all of a muddle when young Jasper, the heir, had come and brushed him aside. Under Jasper's eyes he felt more naked and a-cold than even under the averted glances of the men and women whose baby heads he had

patted. It came to him dimly, like some bruit of a far-away storm, that Jasper was fighting his cause with the people, dragging arrears of rent from them, evicting, serving notices to quit; for Jasper believed in a fighting policy. But it made the old man more comfortless in a world where everyone used to be pleasant.

The mists gathered in the valleys, and began to creep up the hillside. Old Hunting-Cap wondered vaguely whether Lanty Hurley would remember to come for him, to help him home. A Hurley had always been his body-servant; but Lanty was not like those who had gone before him. Sir Jocelyn was so very old that he would not notice omissions. He was as well dozing under the foot of a tree as anywhere else, while Lanty never felt the hours pass sitting in the bar-parlour at the Widdy Doolin's with the widdy's daughter Mary on his knees. Often Old Hunting-Cap had trembled with a helpless gust of anger against Lanty; but to-day he was not in a mood for resentment. If the mists should come up and hide him, they would keep him in a friendlier world than he knew below at the castle. He muttered to himself—

“The little dogs,

Tray, Blanche, and Sweetheart, how they bark at me!”

Something fell on his face like a human tear. He looked up and saw the branches of his tree

lean above him. He turned and rested his weary old head against the tree-trunk, with an odd sense of being comforted. .

"You are the one living thing left to me," he said.

The tree, that was known as Old Hunting-Cap's tree, had been planted the day he was born. His lady-mother had carried him in her arms when he was a little child to see how it thrived. "As the tree thrives the child lives," she had said to herself, and had looked at it with gentle approval. In his industrious boyhood he had watered it and kept the clay to its roots. Under its boughs he had plighted his troth. He had come there with his despair the day his Mary was buried. It was the one thing that had kept for him an unchanged face. If he were to die under it in the mist he would be glad; far better than to die in the great four-poster in the Queen's Room, ringed about with indifferent and unfriendly faces tired of waiting for his last breath.

Some one strode towards him out of the mist. At first he thought it was a tall deer, but presently the figure revealed itself as that of his great-nephew, Jasper.

"You will die of the damp and cold," said the young man, angrily. "Where is that scoundrel Hurley? Is this how he neglects you?"

Old Hunting-Cap smiled at him childishly. Anger generally troubled him, but the concern for himself in this anger gave him a shock of pleasure.

"Never mind Lanty," he said. "He has forgotten me, and I had forgotten him. I was thinking of something, Jasper—something I wanted to ask you."

"You shall tell it to me. Only let me get you home to a fire. Hurley shall pay for this."

The old man got to his feet, helped by the strong young arms. He stood a minute trembling, and looked up at the tree.

"It seems a pity," he said. "But it will be lonely up here when I am gone. I should like to take it with me. It was always my tree. May I have it cut down, Jasper?"

"Why, Uncle Jocelyn, everything is yours," answered the young man, with a conscience-stricken air.

"Ah, no, everything is yours, my lad. I am too old—a cumberer of the ground. It seems a pity to take it from the light and air; but it is my tree. Cut it down, Jasper, and make my coffin of it."

The next day he came for the last time to see his tree. When the axe went to the heart of it, he cried out and fell forward; young Jasper only caught him in time. And then he was carried home and put to bed; and in a few hours he died, as though the tree

had kept the life in him, and they must die together. So of Old Hunting-Cap's tree they made the solid planks for his coffin. It was as though it were a boat to carry him far away to the land of friendly faces.

THE CASTLE OF DROMORE

THE wintry winds whistled round the Castle of Dromore, and below the piping of the winds there came a dull, persistent sound—the thud of the seas breaking at the foot of the crag on which the ancient house of the L'Estranges was built.

There were four persons in the room—Michael L'Estrange, Mistress Pamela (his sister), Eily (his daughter), and M. le Vicomte de Poitiers.

The latter, a young gentleman of about twenty-three years, stood with a bowed head, holding a skein of wool, which Mistress Pamela was winding into a ball. He was extremely elegant in his coat and breeches of pearl-grey silk, with white waistcoat and white silk stockings. His hair he wore powdered, albeit the new Jacobinism was bringing in the fashion of wearing one's own hair; and it could not be denied that the powder was becoming to the freshness of his face. He wore a slight moustache with points at either end. Its blackness and the darkness of his vivacious eyes were in pleasant contrast with his powder.

Looking at him, bent low before Mistress Pamela's

faded beauty, Michael L'Estrange's heart smote him at what he had to do.

He glanced sorrowfully at his daughter's profile, where she sat at the old piano with its high back of faded silk. It threw into delightful relief the rich colour of her cheeks, and the outline of her bronze-coloured head, which had never known powder. There were soft fires in her eyes as they looked up while she sang. It was a song made for a child of her own house.

"Take time to thrive, my rose of hope, in the Castle of Dromore,

Take heed, young eaglet, till your wings have feathers fit to soar,

A little rest, and then the world is full of work to do.
Sing hushaby lullaloo lo lan, sing hushaby lullaloo.

The rich voice, almost too full for her slender young body, broke in the passionate tenderness of the nurse's song, and she turned from the piano with a wavering smile on her lips, though the passion of the music yet lingered in the eyes under the long lashes.

M. le Vicomte de Poitiers made a half-impulsive movement towards her. Then he remembered the fetters on his hands, and with a little murmur of apology to Mistress Pamela kept his place before her. Mistress Pamela had noticed the movement and smiled to herself. The woman was not so dead in her that she could not appreciate the young Frenchman's

charming ways towards her. And his coming was an answer to prayer. Yes, surely, an answer to her prayers. What a match for Eily! And the child head over ears in love with him! The son of one of the greatest statesmen and soldiers in Europe! What a chance that in doing the grand tour he should have visited these wilds, and fallen head over ears in love with Eily!

But what was Michael saying? What was Michael, with his terrible pride, his fanatical sense of honour, saying? Mistress Pamela turned pale under her powder.

"You go to Dublin to-morrow, I understand, M. le Vicomte?" said Michael L'Estrange.

The young gentleman was so startled that he let Mistress Pamela's wools fall, and made no effort to pick them up again.

"Pardon," he said, "Monsieur L'Estrange! To Dublin! No, I had not thought of it. I had thought to fish the trout in your delightful river, when the spring should come."

The colour came and went in his ingenuous cheek. There was a sharp sound in the room, as though some one had caught her breath in a sob. Then the door closed; Eily had gone out.

"The trout-fishing is good," agreed Michael L'Estrange, "but so it is in a thousand streams. You are travelling to see the world. Dromore is

not the world, and if I remember rightly, M. le Vicomte, you intended but to spend one night in the Angler's Rest, which must have poor accommodation for your suite."

"It is excellent," the young man answered confusedly. "But indeed, I was not thinking of it. I have found friends here, in the Castle of Dromore." His eyes pleaded piteously, but Michael L'Estrange had set his face like a flint. "It is what my father would have wished. 'Go then,' he said, when he parted with me, 'see the world, my child, see men and women, beautiful scenery and strange cities. Make friends, enlarge thy mind, come back to me a man of the world. Yet remember always that the world is not things, but persons, that no natural beauty of inanimate things can equal in interest the profound fascination of the human character.'"

"M. le Duc is a past master in his knowledge of the minds of men," said Michael L'Estrange coldly, "but you will go to Dublin to-morrow, monsieur."

The young man threw out his hands with a gesture of despair.

"You drive me forth," he said. "A day or two ago you offered me your hospitality for the Christmas, to see the mummers, the mystery-play at your market-cross—those so interesting survivals. What have I done, M. L'Estrange?"

A low murmur of protest from Mistress Pamela in

her corner, that hardened Michael L'Estrange's face. He turned away, and began lifting one thing after another from the mantel-shelf, and putting them back in their places.

"I am sorry, M. le Vicomte," he said, breaking the silence at last, "that your visit to the Castle of Dromore has come to an end."

"I go," said the young man, in a low voice; "there is nothing to do but for me to go, with a million thanks, M. L'Estrange, for your gracious hospitality. But I will come again. Ah, yes! I will come again. My father shall plead for me."

"Your father's hands are too full of the affairs of Europe, young sir, to come as a suppliant to the Castle of Dromore and the poor L'Estranges."

L'Estrange spoke bitterly, his eye taking in the great bare room, where every article of furniture cried out for renewing.

M. le Vicomte bent low over Mistress Pamela's hand as he kissed it. Then he bowed deeply to Michael L'Estrange, and was gone. The clang of the great door behind him seemed to jar all the house.

"Were you wise, brother?" asked Mistress Pamela, lifting her tearful eyes from her knitting. "The young man was unexceptionable in every way."

"You are too modest, madam," answered Michael L'Estrange, with bitter mockery. "The minister of a king, who is more king than his master—what

has his only son to do with the daughter of the L'Estranges?"

"We are a proud and ancient family, brother."

"Too proud to seek such an alliance. Is the Castle of Dromore a spider's web to entrap the son of the Duc de Launay? Let him call home his lad. We want none of him, neither I nor my girl."

That night Michael L'Estrange sat late. The next morning at daybreak, Martin, his soldier-servant, who had been with him at Fontenoy, set out with a letter in his breast addressed to the Duc de Launay.

After that, the sadness which had seemed to lift from the Castle of Dromore fell on it more heavily.

Eily shunned her father; and the old spinet no longer tinkled to her melodious singing of "The Castle of Dromore," and "The Foggy Dew," and "The Lady of Albany's Lament for King Charles." Michael L'Estrange and his sister had the drawing-room to themselves of evenings, and though he had had his way and vindicated his honour, he was uneasily conscious of his sister's reproachful eye upon him, and the depth of her sighs as she carried on her interminable knitting.

Many weeks elapsed before Martin returned. He had gone in mild October; it was snowy Christmas weather when he came back. He had a letter from the Duc de Launay, the contents of which were somewhat surprising to Michael L'Estrange.

The writer thanked him for his consideration for the family of de Launay, and went on :

“There will be in your neighbourhood almost as soon as this letter a friend of our house, M. de Corr  ze, whom I commend to your courtesy. He will express whatever I have failed in, of my admiration for an honour so delicate, a pride so generous.”

There was no time to decline M. de Corr  ze as a guest, if a L'Estrange could have thought of committing such a crime against hospitality. Briefly Michael L'Estrange imparted the news to his household that they might look for such a visitor any hour of the day. There was no suggestion on his part that M. de Corr  ze was other than one of his old comrades in the Low Countries, and as such Mistress Pamela accepted him. Eily received the tidings indifferently, as she had been doing with most things of late. She was not sullen. On the contrary, she was exquisitely gentle with her father when they met. But there was a hint of a mutinous spirit about her red lips, and an unextinguished sparkle in her eyes, which told that she was not a likely one to give up her happiness, even at the bidding of the father she worshipped.

M. de Corr  ze arrived, accompanied only by an old soldier-servant, on the very evening of the mummers' play. It was not till the supper-hour that Eily made

his acquaintance. He was a little old man, who walked with a limp, and had the tiniest old parchment face, with a thousand wrinkles upon it.

He came to the supper-table in a faded uniform, with a few medals on his breast. Insignificant, Eily had thought him at the first moment, if she so much as thought upon him, a mere piece of flotsam from the old wars; but as the minutes passed she began to change her mind. A sense of power, of domination, seemed to hang about the old soldier. His eyes now—those little eyes in deep sockets under pent-house brows—how piercing they were, how commanding! Eily L'Estrange had an odd thought that if those eyes commanded her to do anything she must obey.

He faced her at the round table, and Eily felt those eyes often upon her. They made her curiously shy, yet their expression for her was a kind one. Now and again she tried to meet his glance, but her eyes got no higher than the medals on his breast. To her they meant nothing. Not so with Michael L'Estrange. At sight of them his eye had kindled; for an instant he had made a gesture as though he would salute like a soldier. From the moment of seeing them, his manner had a reverence towards his guest, strange enough in one of his name, seeing how highly they ranked their own house and their own blood.

As the supper passed, the two fell to talking of

battles. They had fought in the same field, for the lilies of France. M. de Corr  ze had apparently acquainted himself with his host's distinctions as a soldier; and presently Eily forgot her fears of the guest, in watching with sparkling eyes her father's face, and listening to the stirring recital of the things the two old soldiers had passed through.

M. de Corr  ze seemed as loth to leave the Castle of Dromore as M. le Vicomte de Poitiers had been. His stay of a day or two lengthened to a week or more. It was bright Christmas weather, frosty, with icicles hung on every bough. They had had all the Christmas diversions. The mummers who romped through their strange medley of Christian and Pagan story night after night at the Castle of Dromore had played their Old Testament mystery-play at the Tholsel. M. de Corr  ze had privately been made free of the bull-baiting, which no longer took place in the bull-ring, since modern ways grew squeamish, but to which all the world went when it was held in a deep quarry on L'Estrange's land.

Christmas Day came bright and clear, with a continuance of the hard weather. There was plenty of skating on the marshes inland from the Castle of Dromore—miles of it—which reminded M. de Corr  ze, he said, of the Lowlands of Holland in a hard winter.

The two old comrades smoked their pipes on the banks of the marshes that Christmas afternoon, and

talked insatiably of old battles. They had never yet touched the subject which was the cause of M. de Corr  ze's visit, but after a time, as Eily's lonely young figure passed and repassed them on the ice, they came naturally to it.

"She is charming, charming," said de Corr  ze energetically—"as graceful as yon swan when he is in his native element, as lovely as a goddess!"

"She is my one joy in life," said Michael L'Estrange, with a sigh.

"You will not care to give her up to a husband?"

"Ah! I would not have her grow old unmarried. But . . . there is no one here for her. The few gentlefolk enjoy themselves in Dublin. There are only the peasants and shopkeepers of our little town."

"Only those?"

Michael L'Estrange flushed.

"You know she had another suitor, de Corr  ze, since you are the Duc de Launay's friend. But that I did not entertain. It would be no suitable marriage for the Vicomte de Poitiers."

"Ah, my friend"—M. de Corr  ze took snuff and then handed the snuff-box to his companion—"you say so; yet I think you hold your child the equal of any man."

"Perhaps I am too proud not to see it as the world would see it."

"What would you have more? Yours is a noble and ancient family, as honourable in you as in any of the line. The child is . . . divine. I understand the lad's infatuation. I am become infatuated myself."

"His father would not agree with you, de Corréze."

"Ah, why not? He is a brave man, and simple in his way. He married for love himself, and he would have set his wife against all Europe. He would have the same happiness for his boy."

"If I could believe it!"

"You would recall the Vicomte?"

"I could desire nothing better. The child loves him. I am in conflict with her—I who have never denied her anything. It hurts me."

Again M. de Corréze took snuff.

"Ah, bah! Do not fret, my friend. We cannot hinder them, those children. We are but a pebble in the stream. They sweep past us."

He had seen, as Michael L'Estrange had not, how in the gathering dark another skater had joined Eily on the ice, and taken her hand, and the two had glided away together into obscurity.

The old soldiers had time to be cold before Eily tired of her skating. A thin winter moon hung over the landscape as they went homeward, and the Christmas bells jangled from the squat church-tower of Dromore.

Eily was in furs to her ears. It was M. de Corr  ze's fancy that her eyes sparkled like diamonds in the shadow of her velvet hood. One hand she kept in her muff. The other she had thrust within her father's arm, but when he was detained a little while on the way by some one who had business with him, it seemed the most natural thing for her to transfer it to M. de Corr  ze's arm.

The old soldier lifted it to his lips with tender gallantry.

"To think I was afraid of you a week ago!" said Eily with bright confidence.

"You are not now, my child?"

"Not the least bit in the world—only afraid that you will leave us, M. de Corr  ze."

"I cannot remain much longer. I have a business to finish. Afterwards there are . . . ah! . . . quantities of business for me to do elsewhere."

He waved his free hand with a widely-embracing gesture.

"Let your business here be as long in the doing as possible. How we shall miss you, M. de Corr  ze!"

"Ah, little Eily, you will not be wholly bereft of company! What of the gentleman on the ice? I grew to fear that you were coming back to us no more."

"M. de Corr  ze"—Eily's voice faltered—"since you saw us, I must explain. He is waiting for his father to help him. It is all my father has against

him, that the Duc de Launay is too great for an alliance with us. But Henri says he can trust his father's love."

"He said that?"

Eily gripped his arm hard.

"He is sure of it. He is an only son, and he and his father are all in all to each other. If I were to tell you"

"*Were* all in all to each other," said the old soldier, and his voice had the faintest trace of pain.

"Ah, M. de Corr  ze, you do not know the Duc de Launay, or you would not suggest his being jealous. He is great, so great and noble! He would only think what his love could do, could sacrifice for Henri, for M. le Vicomte. He loves as greatly as he lives."

"His son says so?"

"He says a thousand things more. When I see him, if I ever see him, I shall have to fall on my knees—so great, so good! They do not always go together, M. de Corr  ze."

"No, child, but I hear your father coming. Listen now. A friend of mine may come to-night. Will you have another *couvert* placed for him at table?"

"Why, gladly, M. de Corr  ze! It is a night for hospitality. Think how sad it is for those who must sup alone in a little inn like the Angler's Rest at Dromore!"

Eily drew the deepest of sighs, and M. de Corr  ze patted gently the little hand upon his arm, as Michael L'Estrange joined them, putting an end to the conversation.

If Eily was lovely in her velvet and furs, she was no less lovely in her short-waisted gown of white flowered satin with a bunch of holly-berries and leaves at her breast. The little party wore its finest in honour of the festival. Mistress Pamela was in her grey satin and Limerick lace. Michael L'Estrange wore his old soldier's coat, the garment he was proudest of. But the greatest of changes had taken place in the garb of M. de Corr  ze.

He was very richly though quietly clad in a suit of plum-coloured silk, and on his breast a diamond star glittered magnificently, so magnificently that the sight of it seemed to strike Michael L'Estrange dumb. Mistress Pamela was too well-bred to express surprise at the beauty of the guest's decoration. But Eily clapped her hands like a child, and cried out in wonder and delight.

"Tush, child!" said M. de Corr  ze, "they are dim by your eyes. Hush!"

Over the sob of the sea, and the crackling of the old ship's logs on the hearth, a bell pealed through the house.

"A visitor?" said Michael L'Estrange, turning to his daughter.

"Your friend, M. de Corréze?" Eily said in her turn.

De Corréze put his hand on Michael L'Estrange's arm.

"My son will join me here to night," he said.
"Will you ask him to sup, my friend?"

"That will I most heartily."

The door was flung open, but no young gentleman crossed the threshold. Instead there stood old Denis the butler, in confusion.

"There is a messenger below," he said, "a mounted man, splashed from head to foot with hard riding. He carries despatches for the Duc de Launay, and will not listen when I tell him he is not here."

"Ah!" said M. de Corréze with an expressive gesture of disgust. "So they have found me out. The Empire might have run a little longer without me, seeing that I am an old man, and cannot live many years longer. The despatches, my friend. Let me see them. I may receive them here, L'Estrange? Ah, Henri!"

"M. le Vicomte de Poitiers," shouted Denis, recovering himself, as a splendid young figure in white and gold passed him, and flung itself upon M. de Corréze.

"Father!"

"Ah, impulsive one! I came in answer to thy letter. It was the best way. Forgive me, my

friend"—to Michael L'Estrange—"my masquerade. I had to see for myself. She is adorable. My only grief is that we rob thee of her, unless indeed thou wouldst leave the Castle of Dromore. Shall we not make them happy, this night of Christmas?"

"Supper is served," announced Denis.

Michael L'Estrange took his daughter's hand, and placed it in the Vicomte's, as the Duc de Launay bent low over Mistress Pamela, praying that he might have the honour of conducting her to the supper-table.



THE END

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